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APO 143, San Francisco, California

MECHANIZED RIFLE TROOP (M-113) (U)
Interim Test Report Number 10
1 November to 31 December 1963

25 May 1964

Approved:

Paul L. Boren
PAUL L. BOREN
Colonel, Armor
Chief

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I. (C) SUMMARY

Changes in corps boundaries, effected during the month of December, shifted the boundary between III and IV Corps further to the south to place more of the Mekong River complex under control of III Corps. Changes in the II and III Corps boundaries relieved III Corps of responsibility for the major portion of the mountainous region to the north (annex A).

Reorganization of armor elements saw the creation of two new groups. These new groups provide for the placement of additional armor operating in the delta area and are composed of troops taken from armored cavalry squadrons of the I, III, and IV Corps. In recognition of the larger area of responsibility of II Corps, no change in armor strength was considered advisable as was done after the corps boundary changes of 1 November 1963 (annex B).

Major activity in armor employment again centered in the areas of III and IV Corps. Summaries of actions observed are contained in sections II through VII, following.

The preceding reports remain valid in their observations concerning the increased insurgent attention to means of defeating armor and the escape of insurgent forces because of failure to execute prompt and aggressive assault. Casualties, vehicle damage, and operation successes are directly related to the aggressiveness of the unit in action.

Logistical support requirements pertaining to major assembly replacement, including engine rebuild, are contained in annex C. This annex also outlines distribution of cupolas, by type, in ARVN.

A description of test troops, discussion of test objectives, and operational plan of test are contained in previous test reports.

The test is considered to be 85 percent complete.

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II. (C) OPERATION IN VICINITY OF BAC LIEU

A. (U) GENERAL

The 5th Mechanized Rifle Troop, 2d Armored Cavalry Squadron (hereafter referred to as 5/2 Troop) participated in an operation during the period 6 to 7 November in the vicinity of Bac Lieu located approximately 125 miles southwest of Saigon.

B. (U) PARTICIPATING UNITS

1. 21st Infantry Division Headquarters
2. 32d Infantry Regiment Headquarters
3. 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry Regiment (hereafter referred to as the 1/32 Battalion)
4. 5/2 Troop
5. One 105mm howitzer platoon

C. (C) MISSION

Seize successive objectives on order. Kill or capture VC in objective areas.

D. (C) CONCEPT OF OPERATION

The 5/2 Troop marches north on the highway leading from Bac Lieu to Phu Loc (WR 802416), crosses the LD in the vicinity of coordinates WR 784350, and attacks on northwest axis to seize successive objectives 8 through 1 (figure 1). At objective 6, the troop conducts a coordinated attack with the 1/32 Battalion. 1/32 Battalion assaults objective 6 from the northwest, and 5/2 Troop assaults from the southwest.

E. (C) RESULTS

1. Friendly losses: 5/2 Troop - one WIA
2. Enemy losses:
 - 1) Eighteen KIA (confirmed)
 - 2) Twenty-four POW (two WIA)

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- 3) Captured Material: Two Chinese carbines; eight rifle belts with cal .30 carbine ammunition; modern medical kit complete with penicillin, other drugs, syringes, etc; 20 blasting caps; two submachine gun clips loaded with ammunition; 12 hand grenades; VC field manuals; and a VC flag.

3. All above enemy losses and captured equipment resulted from 5/2 Troop action.

F. (C) HIGHLIGHTS

The 5/2 Troop departed Bao Lieu and crossed the LD at 060600 November 1963. At approximately 0830, objectives 8 and 7 were secured without incident and the troop continued their attack toward objective 6. During the approach to objective 6, the aerial reconnaissance supporting the troop's operation reported sighting about 50 VC in the vicinity of objective 6. The 1/32 Battalion was late in arriving for the preplanned coordinated attack on this objective and the 5/2 Troop was ordered to make the assault alone. The 5/2 Troop closed rapidly on the VC position as aerial reconnaissance reported the VC's attempting to escape across a canal which ran through the objective. The troop commander quickly split the troop into two sections, one attacking the rear side of the canal (south) and the other crossing the canal in an encircling movement, simultaneously attacking the objective area north of the canal. A brief small arms engagement took place as the troop overran the objective. Within a few minutes, 17 VC had been killed and 14 taken prisoner. One ARVN soldier was wounded in the foot by a fragment from a VC hand grenade. The 5/2 Troop then conducted a thorough search of the area for VC weapons and equipment and located the captured equipment listed in paragraph E above.

The troop resumed the attack at approximately 1030 hours, and by noon had secured objectives 5 and 4 and taken two additional suspects as POW's.

At 1230, while still in the vicinity of objective 4, the troop formed a perimeter defense and awaited two UH-1B aircraft that were reported enroute for pickup of 16 POW's. A 2-hour delay was caused by the late arrival of the UH-1B's, which picked up 10 of the 16 POW's at 1430 hours. This delay caused the 5/2 Troop to lose the momentum of their attack and permitted other VC in the troop's path enough time to escape.

The troop resumed the attack, bypassed objective 3, and secured objective 2 without further VC contact. The last six POW's still with the troop were picked up by UH-1B helicopter in the vicinity of objective 2. The troop then moved out to assault objective 1. This was later identified as a VC combat hamlet. Only women, children, and a few old men were found in the hamlet.

A VC propaganda house located in the center of the hamlet was torn down and all propaganda material destroyed. The 5/2 Troop distributed

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ARVN propaganda leaflets which were read by the inhabitants throughout the hamlet.

The troop withdrew from objective 1 at 1600 hours and were ordered to move to an assembly area in the vicinity of Vinh Thanh (WR 716540). Enroute to the assembly area, aerial reconnaissance reported sighting about 30 VC approximately 1000 meters to the troop's right front. The troop assaulted the position, captured eight POW's and killed one VC. No weapons were found; however, VC manuals were found in the possession of the POW's. Several women and children were found hiding in the rice paddies.

The troop bivouacked for the night at 1900 hours at coordinates WR 680495.

The following morning at 070815 November the troop was refueled by two H-21 helicopters. The resupply took two hours and was accomplished in three lifts, with each H-21 carrying three 55-gallon drums on the first lift, two on the second, and one on the third.

Upon completion of refueling operations the troop was ordered to proceed to the previously designated assembly area in the vicinity of Vinh Thanh (WR 716540). Shortly after arrival at the assembly area further instructions were received to return to Bac Lieu. The troop closed at 1630 hours.

G. (C) FAVORABLE COMMENTS

The unit's aggressiveness, immediate reaction to the commander's orders, use of battle formation, and control during attack of objectives were especially noteworthy. Crews and platoons worked continuously as teams, automatically and immediately assisting each other as the situation required. The troop demonstrated exceptionally high morale and was eager to engage the enemy. The M-113 drivers were highly qualified and exceptionally maintenance conscious. Advice rendered by the US advisor was effective and timely.

H. (C) UNFAVORABLE COMMENTS

The unit was held up for two hours awaiting POW pickup by UH-1B's, and momentum of the attack was thereby lost. Refueling of the unit by H-21's on the morning of 7 November 1963 was accomplished in three lifts by two H-21's and took two hours. By making three lifts, the H-21's unnecessarily exposed themselves to VC fire.

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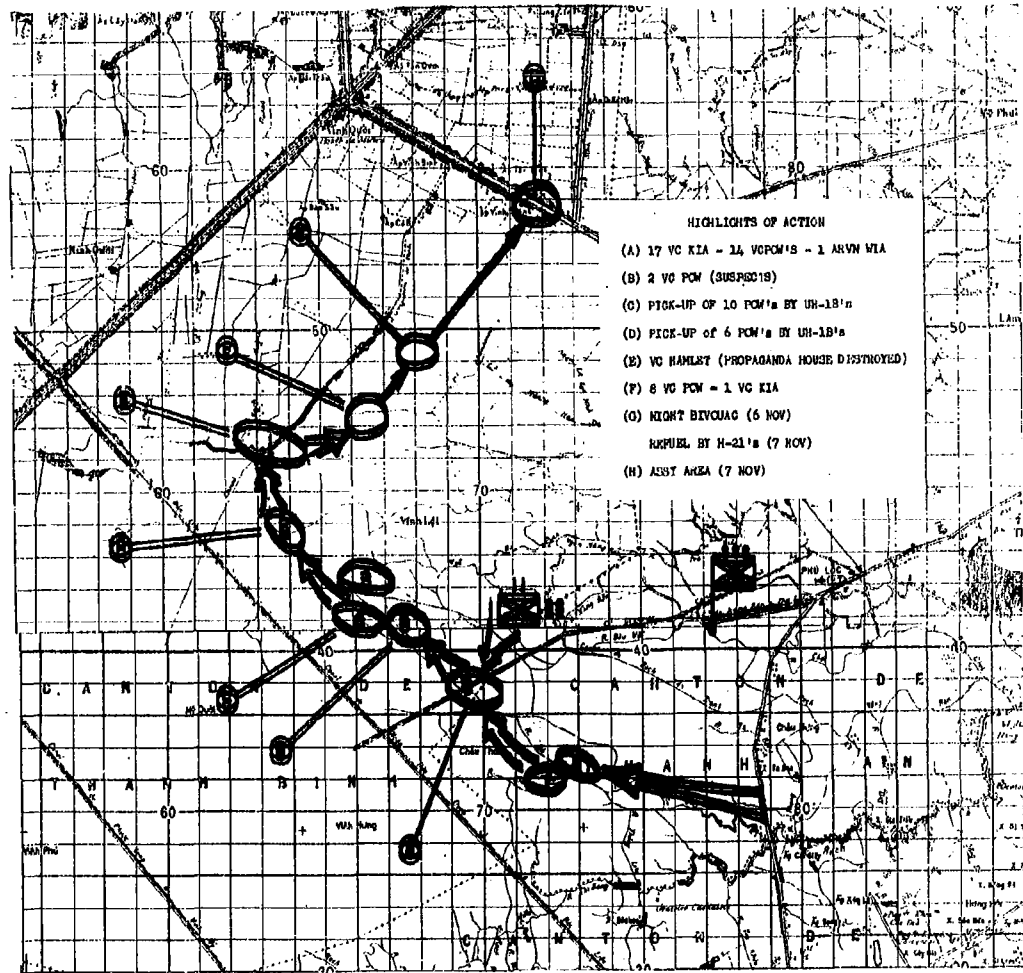


FIGURE 1 (U)

Plan of Operation, Bac Lieu.
Map: Vietnam, 1:100,000, Bac Lieu and Long My
Sheets 238E and 239E
Series L605

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FIGURE 2 (U)
Approach march.



FIGURE 3 (U)
Moving into line formation prior to assault.



FIGURE 4 (U)
Searching for VC attempting to escape in rice paddies.



FIGURE 5 (U)
Captured VC, objective 6.



FIGURE 6 (U)
VC captured during seizure of objective 6.



FIGURE 7 (U)
5/2 commander interrogating POW.

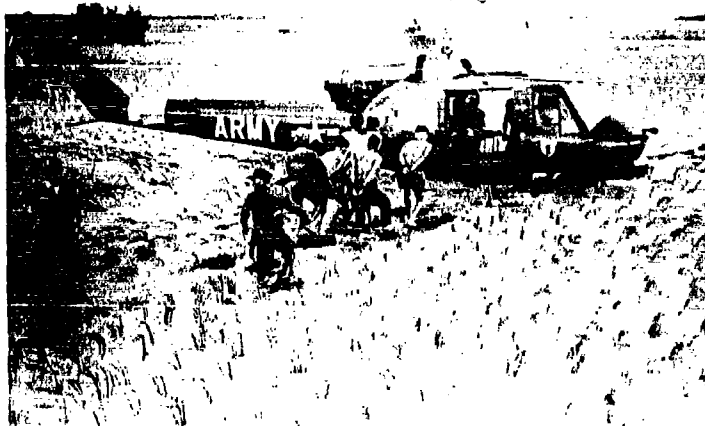


FIGURE 8 (U)
POW pickup by UH-1B helicopter.



FIGURE 9 (U)
M-113's crossing canal by using tow cables and push bars.

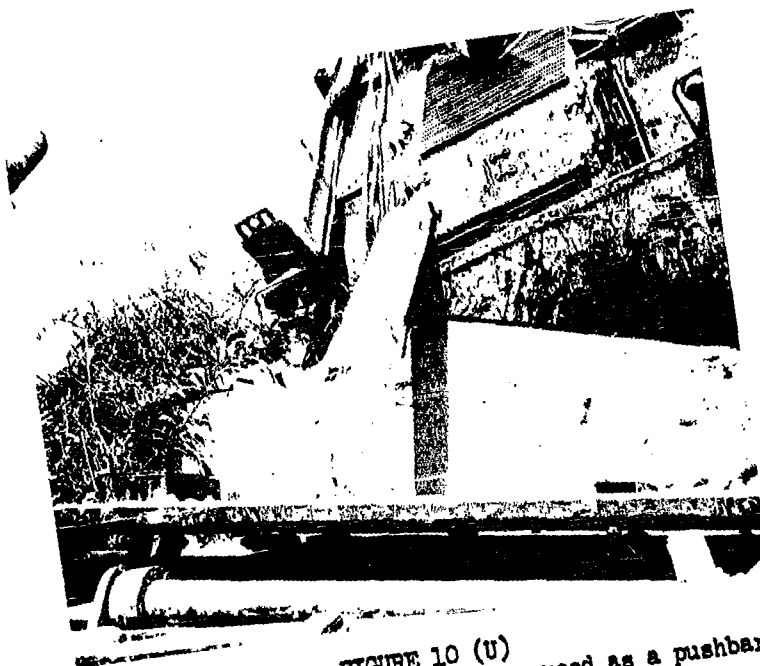


FIGURE 10 (U)
Closeup of barge aluminum bridging used as a pushbar.



FIGURE 11 (U)
Searching objective 1 (VC combat hamlet). Well-prepared VC fox holes and gun emplacements border the tree line.



FIGURE 12 (U)
Refueling by 55-gallon drum.



FIGURE 13 (U)
Close up of refueling.



FIGURE 14 (U)
Maintenance during halt in 5/2 Troop.

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III. OPERATION IN VICINITY OF LONG MY

A. (U) GENERAL

The 5th Mechanized Rifle Troop, 2d Armored Cavalry Squadron, (hereinafter referred to as 5/2 Troop) participated in an operation during the period 14 to 15 November 1963 approximately 10 kilometers southwest of Long My in the province of Chuong Thien located about 105 miles southwest of Saigon.

B. (U) PARTICIPATING UNITS

1. 21st Infantry Division Headquarters
2. 31st Infantry Regiment Headquarters
3. 1st Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment
4. 2d Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment
5. 3d Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment
6. 8th Airborne Battalion
7. 5/2 Troop (21st Infantry Reconnaissance Troop attached)
8. 363d Ranger Company
9. 105mm howitzer battalion (-)

C. (C) MISSION

Attack successive objectives E-6, E-7, and E-8, on axis. Kill or capture VC in objective areas. Link up with 8th Airborne Battalion in the vicinity of objective E-8.

D. (C) CONCEPT OF OPERATION

The 5/2 Troop road marches on 13 November to occupy a forward assembly area approximately seven kilometers north of Long My. Attacks successive assigned objectives as a part of a regimental task force in a 5-pronged clearing action converging in a final killing zone in the center of the area of operation (figure 15).

E. (C) RESULTS

1. Friendly losses: None

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2. Enemy losses: Eight POW's (suspects)

F. (C) HIGHLIGHTS

On 12 November a briefing on the operation was conducted for commanders and staff. LD time for the 5/2 Troop was set at 140600 November. The LD was located approximately one kilometer south of Long My (WR 6370). The troop was alerted to be prepared to road march to an initial assembly area south of the major canal bordering the southern edge of Ap Vinh Dong (WR 6377). The designated route of march to the initial assembly area was north from Bac Lieu (WR 8025) to Tranh Tri (WR 8242), then northeast to Soc Trang (WR 0762), to south of Ap Vinh Dong (WR 6377). This represented approximately a 7-hour road march. The troop commander requested that his troop depart early the following morning (13 November) in order to cross the major canal south of Ap Vinh Dong during daylight hours and be in position to cross the LD at the designated time on 14 November. The 5/2 Troop was combat-loaded and prepared to move at 0630 hours on 13 November, but did not receive movement instructions until 1430 hours, too late to risk a crossing over the major canal north of the assembly area. The troop bivouacked for the night, and had a stand-to at 0430 hours on 14 November. At first light (0700) they crossed the canal over a bridge reinforced with their balk aluminum bridging. Then they proceeded to the LD, crossing it approximately two hours later.

It wasn't until after 0900 that O-1 aircraft became available to the troop for assistance in route reconnaissance, selection of canal crossing sites, and sighting VC positions. As a result, initial progress of the troop through an area honeycombed with canals was slow.

As the troop approached objective E-6, a change in orders was received to bypass objective E-6 and E-7 and link up with the airborne battalion in the vicinity of objective E-8. Enroute to objective E-8, aerial reconnaissance reported sighting about a squad of VC. The troop moved into the area and captured eight suspects, one of whom claimed to be a member of an SDC outpost that had been overrun two days previously. He had been held captive by VC whom he identified. Word was received from division that no VC were in the vicinity of objective E-8, and the troop was given a new objective in the vicinity of a small hamlet approximately three kilometers southeast of objective E-8.

At 1620 hours, as the troop approached the area, (objective B-5) they were directed to delay the assault to allow an air strike on the new objective. The VNAF air strike terminated at 1700 hours after a heavy concentration of HE, napalm, WP, rockets, and cal .50 MG fire. The 5/2 Troop, with attached infantry reconnaissance troop, immediately assaulted and overran the position. A search of the air strike area disclosed frightened women and children, several destroyed homes, and one dead pig. Inhabitants of the hamlet reported that the VC had departed two days earlier. The area surrounding the hamlet was honey-

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combed with fox holes and gun emplacements, but there were no indications that they had been occupied for several days.

Upon terminating the action, the troop established a perimeter defense approximately 1000 meters north of the hamlet (in the rice paddies) and secured the area surrounding the hamlet. At 150930 November the troop was joined by the 21st Regiment Headquarters Company which included the regimental staff members and approximately 60 infantrymen. Nearly 300 men were now riding in 12 M-113's.

The troop received new instructions to move to objective A. As they commenced to move, one of the M-113's broke a universal joint. It was necessary to stand by until a replacement part could be removed from a deadlined M-113 at Bac Lieu and be delivered by UH-1B helicopter to the unit in the field. At 1245 hours the replacement part was received, and the vehicle was repaired in 40 minutes. At 1330 hours, four H-21 helicopters arrived with sufficient fuel to refuel the troop. Refueling was completed in 30 minutes. At 1400 hours the troop proceeded toward a hamlet approximately five kilometers to the east. At 1500 hours, as they approached the hamlet, an air strike hit the area and the troop was directed to assault immediately following the air strike. Approximately 1000 meters from the hamlet, they were forced to cross a canal in order to be in position for the attack. Two crossings sites were established--one by using a wooden push bar for one M-113 to push another across, and the other by laying two balk aluminum bridge sections on the floor of the canal, thus providing enough traction for the M-113 to gain the opposite bank. The remaining carriers were lined up in back of these two vehicles, connected by tow cables, and pulled across the canal in two chains. The troop completed the crossing in 12 minutes. Then they moved on line, with the air strike still in progress, to a point approximately 300 meters from the hamlet, and prepared for the assault.

The air strike was reported by radio as being terminated at 1520 and the troop assaulted under cover of the M-113 cal .50 and .30 MG's. The M-113's halted at the wood line, and infantry dismounted and attacked the area. Hamlet inhabitants reported that VC were fleeing through the dense swamp (jungle-type vegetation) surrounding the hamlet. As the infantry moved rapidly in pursuit of the fleeing VC two VNAF AD-6 close support aircraft made another air strike on the hamlet, launching rockets and HE bombs in the midst of the ARVN infantry. Immediate attempts were made, without success, through all available communication channels, to lift the VNAF air strike. The AD-6's continued to strike in the area of the assaulting infantry and at 1550 hours the 5/2 Troop and infantry withdrew to avoid casualties. No further action occurred as the troop proceeded to objective B where they bivouacked for the night. The following morning they received orders to return to Bac Lieu via the same route they took to Ap Vinh Dong.

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G. (C) FAVORABLE COMMENTS

The 5/2 Troop effected an extremely rapid canal crossing (12 minutes) by hooking their M-113's together with tow cables and pulling them across (15 November). Refueling of the 5/2 Troop was planned and executed efficiently in a minimum of time. They requested and received authorization to destroy the partially full and empty 55-gallon drums after refueling. The drums were destroyed to prevent useable material from falling into the hands of the VC, as the troop could not carry them. Furthermore, the partially filled drums would have been a potential hazard if carried on the already crowded M-113's.

H. (C) UNFAVORABLE COMMENTS

There was no direct communication between ground forces and close support aircraft on 15 November. This resulted in friendly forces being subjected to a VNAF air strike. The close support aircraft could have been used to advantage if the strike had been controlled from the ground and shifted to harass or block VC escape routes. The strike continued for 20 minutes after division reported to the US advisor that it was terminated. On the morning of the initial attack, there were no O-1 liaison airplanes available to the 5/2 Troop until 0900 hours. The absence of liaison aircraft to assist in selection of canal crossing sites and route reconnaissance through a dense network of canals delayed initial progress of the troop.

Upon termination of the operation, the troop was in a position to return to home station at Bac Lieu by a more direct route than the one they took. Instead, they were directed to assemble at Long My and then to road march back to Bac Lieu by the same lengthy route they had used on 13 November. Use of the long route unnecessarily subjected them to possible VC ambush and road mines.

Because of the limited number of roads in the area, more consideration should be given to crosscountry movement. It is highly possible that frequent use of the limited road net by this troop will result in destruction of M-113's by road mines and ambush as more recoilless rifles and other antitank weapons become available to the VC.

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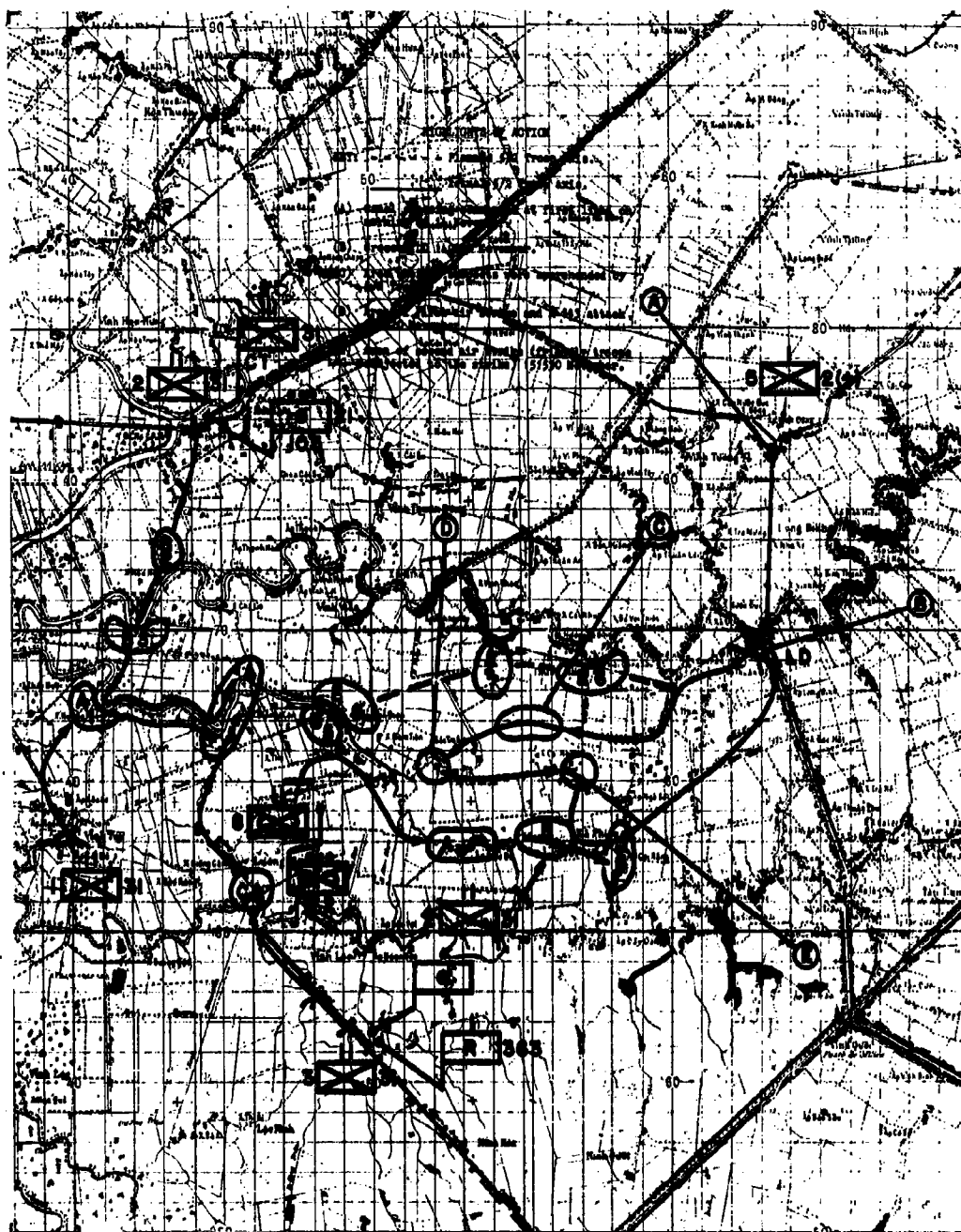


FIGURE 15 (U)

Plan of Operation, Long My.
 Map: Vietnam, 1:100,000, Long My
 Sheets 238E and 238W
 Series 105



FIGURE 16 (U)
5/2 Troop reinforces bridge.

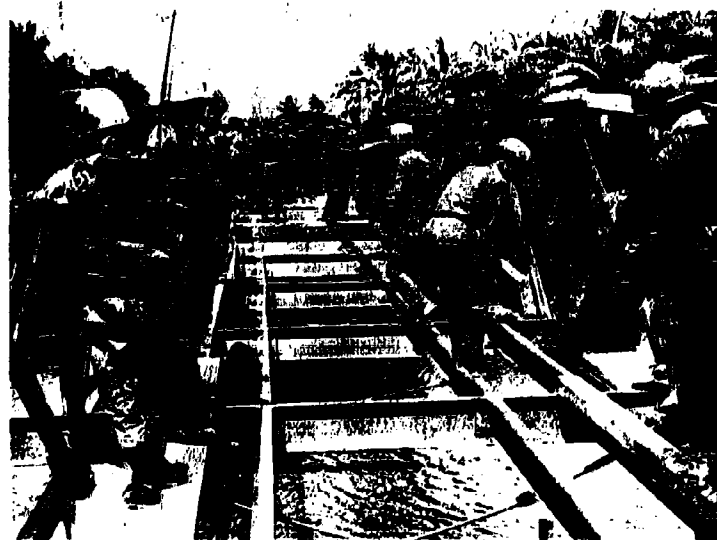


FIGURE 17 (U)
Another view of bridge reinforcement.

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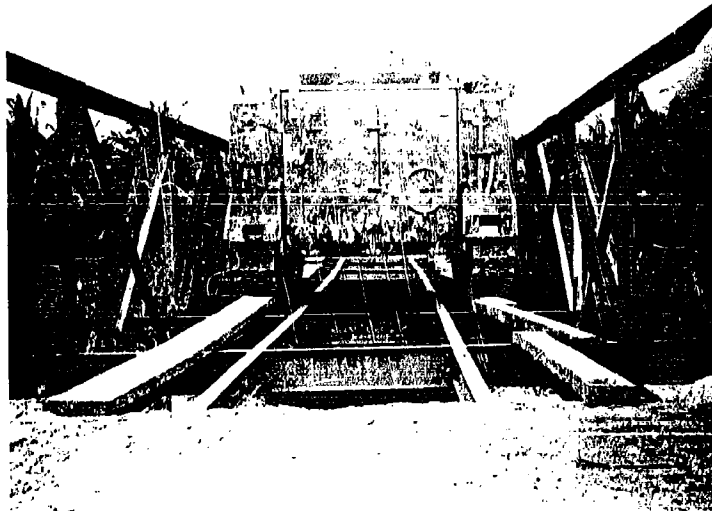


FIGURE 18 (U)
M-113 crosses bridge after planking has been laid.



FIGURE 19 (U)
5/2 Troop attack following first air strike on objective B-5.

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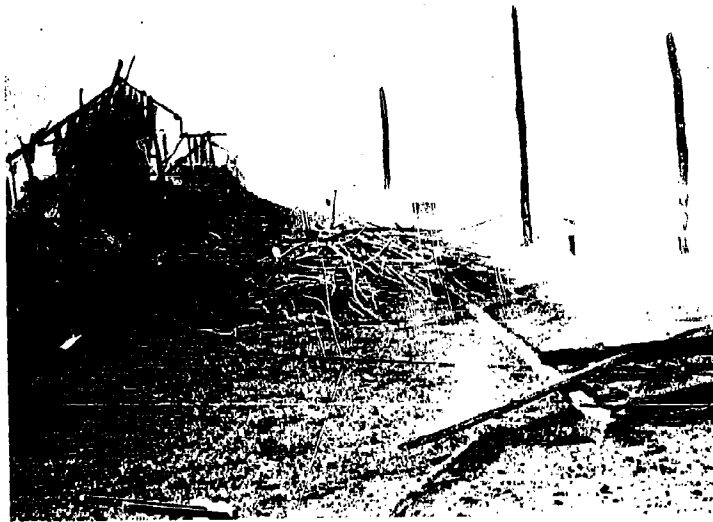


FIGURE 20 (U)
Peasant house destroyed by VNAF air strike.



FIGURE 21 (C)
Damaged M-113 universal joint.

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FIGURE 22 (U)
Napalm and HE bombs land on objective A.



FIGURE 23 (U)
Infantry moving into objective A while M-113's support.



FIGURE 24 (U)
M-113's crossing canal.

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IV. OPERATION IN VICINITY OF MY THO/GO CONG

A. (U) GENERAL

The 4th Mechanized Rifle Troop, 2d Cavalry Squadron (hereafter referred to as 4/2 Troop) participated in a 7th Division operation (Duc Thang 60/TG) during the period 15 to 18 November 1963 in the Dinh Tuong Province. This operation was planned as four consecutive one-day search and clear missions. Areas of operation were:

- 1) First day: Seven km northeast of Go Cong
- 2) Second day: Five km southeast of Go Cong
- 3) Third day: Eight km northeast of Cho Gao
- 4) Fourth day: Seven km east of Ben Tranh

Two-to-three-day old intelligence reports identified two companies of the 514th VC Battalion in the vicinity of Go Cong (XS 840455) (figure 25). It was believed that they were reinforced by a local district VC company. The areas of operations were characterized by sparsely populated rice paddies and divided by a few large canals and numerous small canals.

B. (U) PARTICIPATING UNITS

1. 7th Infantry Division Headquarters
2. 1st Battalion, 10th Infantry Regiment (1/10 Battalion).
3. 3d Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment (3/12 Battalion).
4. 1st Battalion, 11th Regiment (1/11 Battalion) (heliborne reserve - was never committed).
5. 2d Marine Battalion
6. 21st River Assault Group (augmented with two LCU's and one LSM - did not participate on the third and fourth days).
7. Four civil guard companies
8. 4/2 Troop (7th Ranger Company attached)

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C. (C) MISSION

Search and clear operation areas of VC infiltrators.

D. (C) CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

Establish blocking positions at natural terrain barriers. The attacking force consisting of armor (4/2 Troop) and infantry, assisted by armed helicopter and heliborne elements, drives against the blocking positions (figures 25 to 28).

E. (C) RESULTS

1. Friendly losses:

- 1) Fourteen KIA
- 2) Twenty-nine WIA
- 3) One GMC truck destroyed

2. Enemy losses:

- 1) Twenty-four KIA
- 2) Twenty-three POW's
- 3) Five MAT-49's
- 4) One carbine (US)
- 5) Seven hand grenades

F. (C) HIGHLIGHTS

1. First Day

4/2 Troop, consisting of 11 M-113's, reinforced by the 7th Ranger Company, departed My Tho at 1415/45 November enroute to Tan An to load onto two LCU's which would take them to participate in operations in the vicinity of Go Cong (figure 29). The troop arrived at Tan An at 1630 hours to await the arrival of the two LCU's scheduled for 1730 hours. At 1900 hours, the LCU's had not arrived. The Marine battalion was loaded on an LSM at My Tho to participate in the operation as scheduled.

The 4/2 Troop CO contacted division GP by radio to inform them that the LCU's had not arrived at Tan An as of 1915 hours. At 2000 hours, division informed the troop CO that the LCU's should arrive at

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Tan An by 2045 hours. They finally arrived at 2155 hours. Six M-113's were loaded on the first LCU within 30 minutes. By this time, however, the rapidly receding tide prevented the second LCU from loading at the same site. After numerous unsuccessful loading attempts, the LCU moved approximately one kilometer east to attempt the loading. After partially destroying two huts at the river's edge in another unsuccessful attempt, the LCU returned to the original location and finally secured a suitable loading site. Loading of the five remaining M-113's was accomplished by 150050 November. No US Naval advisors were present during the loading of the M-113's.

The Marine battalion was off-loaded north of Go Cong as planned. This site was also its LD. Upon arrival at the LD, numerous groups of five to six VC were observed rapidly evacuating the area and moving south. No attempt was made to fire on the fleeing VC by either the ground forces or the Naval units; and the Navy was equipped with 40mm guns.

The first LCU, containing six M-113's, arrived at its off-loading site at 0730 hours. However, the first off-loaded M-113 immediately became bogged down in the muddy bank. The LCU abandoned the site (leaving the bogged M-113 and crew--figure 32) and located a more suitable site in the vicinity of XS 873569 (figure 25). The M-113's were finally off-loaded from both LCU's and enroute to the first objective (D) by 1130 hours, some four hours late.

(Objectives D to R were searched and cleared by the 4/2 Troop with objective R cleared by 1615 hours. As the 4/2 Troop was clearing the final objective (R) at 1615 hours, the 1/10 Infantry Battalion reported they were receiving small arms fire from the vicinity of objective P. The 4/2 Troop was ordered by division to proceed to objective P to assist the infantry battalion. Enroute to the objective, the troop received 81mm mortar fire from ARVN mortars. The artillery observer accompanying the troop immediately had the fire lifted.

A squad of VC, apparently very well hidden when the troop first searched objective P, fired on the 1/10 battalion as it approached the objective. However, the VC slipped behind the 4/2 Troop and escaped to the north. The troop departed the area of operations at 1930 hours and closed Go Cong at 2000 hours.

An unusual incident occurred near the vicinity of objective H where natives reported that a force of VC, size undetermined, entered the village of Xom Vam Lang (XS 9451) during the night of 13 November 1963 and destroyed the market place, burned numerous houses on the outskirts of the village, burned all the fishing nets, and destroyed a very large quantity of fish recently caught by local fishermen. The apparent reason for this destruction was that the VC had requested cooperation from the local populace which had not been given. This

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village had a population of approximately 2,000 people and was one of the largest suppliers of fish products for the market in Saigon.

2. Second Day

4/2 Troop departed from Go Cong at 160610 November to participate in the second day of the operation. After crossing the LD at 0700 hours, the troop entered a VC hamlet approximately two kilometers north of the LD. No VC were encountered but the troop did not effectively search the hamlet for evidence of personnel and weapons. Upon approaching objective A-1, approximately 20 to 25 individuals were observed running from the fields. Friendly support aircraft reported that these individuals were civilians and not VC. Objective A-2 was cleared at 0840 hours and A-3 was cleared at 0930 hours. Within the area of objective A-4, the troop destroyed a VC information booth and a VC war memorial. As the memorial was being pushed over by an M-113, a mine of undetermined size detonated at the base of the memorial. No injuries or damage to the M-113 resulted from this explosion. The objective was cleared at 1045 hours. Objectives A-5, A-6, and A-7 were cleared by 1550 hours without incident. The troop departed the area of operations and returned to Go Cong at 1815 hours where, upon arrival, the commander received an order to proceed to Cho Gao at 1930 hours to prepare for the third day of operation. The troop arrived at Cho Gao at 2100 hours and remained there overnight.

3. Third Day

The troop departed Cho Gao at 170525 November. A canal was selected as an LD. LD time was 0700 hours but the LD was not completely crossed until 0815 hours because the troop encountered considerable difficulty in exiting. Too much time was lost in selecting a suitable exit, in drivers' over-steering the M-113's while swimming the vehicle, and in preparing the capstan-anchor recovery expedient (figures 48 and 49). In addition, one M-113, upon exiting from the canal, broke the left idler when it hit a bridge abutment (figure 50). This M-113 was left at the canal site (LD) with a security squad and did not participate in the operation that day. The 2d Squadron Maintenance Section replaced the idler during the day and the M-113 rejoined the troop after the operation was completed.

As the troop was moving to objective 4, the Marine battalion encountered enemy resistance while blocking objective 24. The Marines killed 5 VC, captured 11 VC, 1 carbine, and 2 MAT-49 rifles. No friendly losses were reported. The 4/2 Troop cleared objective 4 at 1115 hours without contact. While approaching objective 14 at 1245 hours, the troop was halted by the CP to permit artillery to fire on this objective. After approximately two hours of artillery fire and air strikes by two VNAF T-28's and one B-26, the troop assaulted the objective without receiving hostile fire. There were no VC casualties observed within the objective area after the heavy artillery fire and air strikes. Only

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two very frightened children and a few chickens were observed moving around.

At 1615 hours, as the troop was moving back to the CP, a suspect was encountered in a rice paddy. Machine gun fire and repeated warnings by the troop commander failed to stop him. He entered a small hut where he remained momentarily and then came out and surrendered. Upon searching the same hut, 16 more suspects were apprehended.

The troop departed from the operational area and returned to My Tho at 1800 hours to prepare for the fourth day of the operation.

4. Fourth Day

At 180615 November the troop departed from My Tho to participate in the fourth day of operations in the Ben Tranh area. There was no contact made with the VC during the day and nothing was observed worthy of reporting. The troop returned to My Tho at 1600 hours to perform much needed maintenance.

G. (C) UNFAVORABLE COMMENTS

The 21st River Assault Group was not properly trained in selecting suitable loading and landing sites for mechanized units. They neither prepared nor practiced for landing and loading. It is reasonable to assume that prior reconnaissance, on the part of either force, would have eliminated the numerous difficulties experienced. Some of these difficulties might have been eliminated if the river force had had a US Naval advisor during the action. It was noticeable throughout all four days of this operation that 4/2 Troop did not adequately search their assigned objectives for weapons and equipment. The troop did not use their issued mine detector set because it was left behind at their home station.

Artillery and mortar fire was not properly employed. The troop was required to wait approximately two hours before assaulting the objective until artillery, mortar fire, and air strikes had ceased. The troop commander earlier requested permission to assault the objective but was denied permission as higher headquarters felt that the objective area should be covered more thoroughly with these fires. It should be noted that there were no preplanned artillery fires. These fires would greatly enhance the capability of attacking ground forces.

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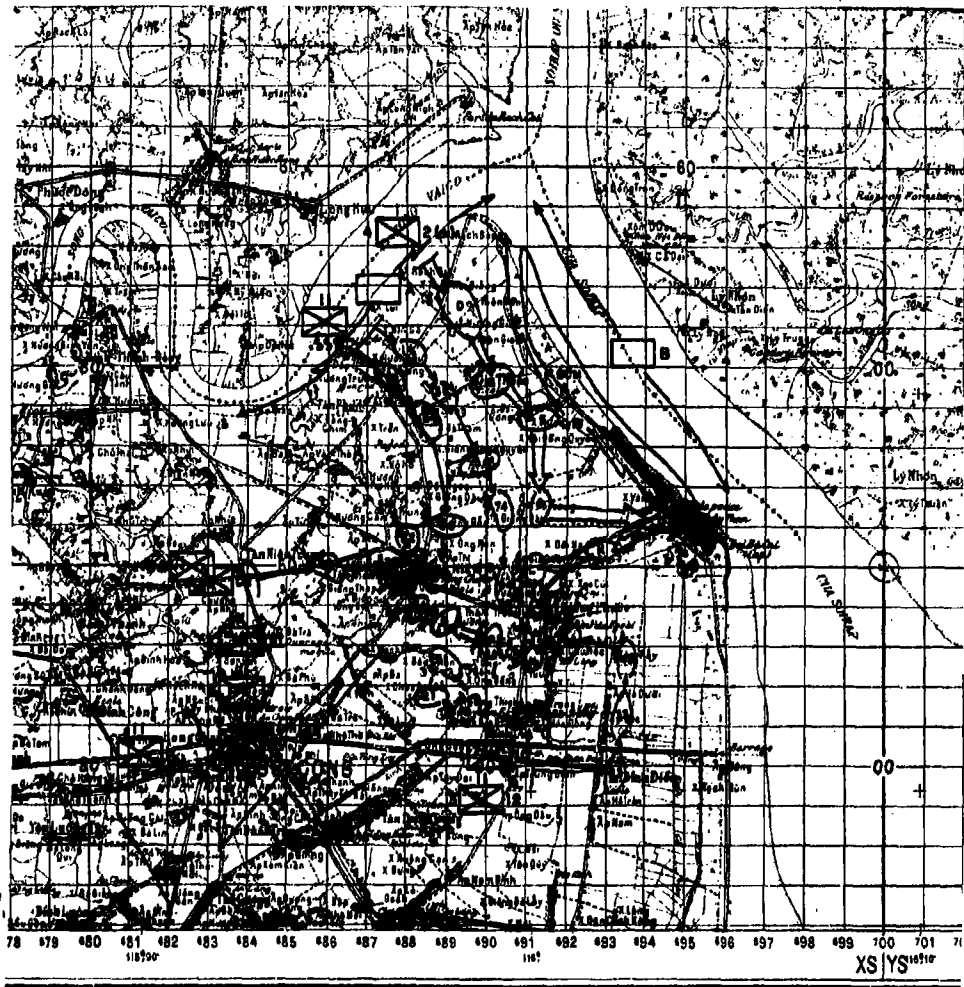


FIGURE 25 (U)

First day, seven km northeast of Go Cong.
Map: Vietnam, 1:100,000, Cholon
Sheet 230W
Series L605

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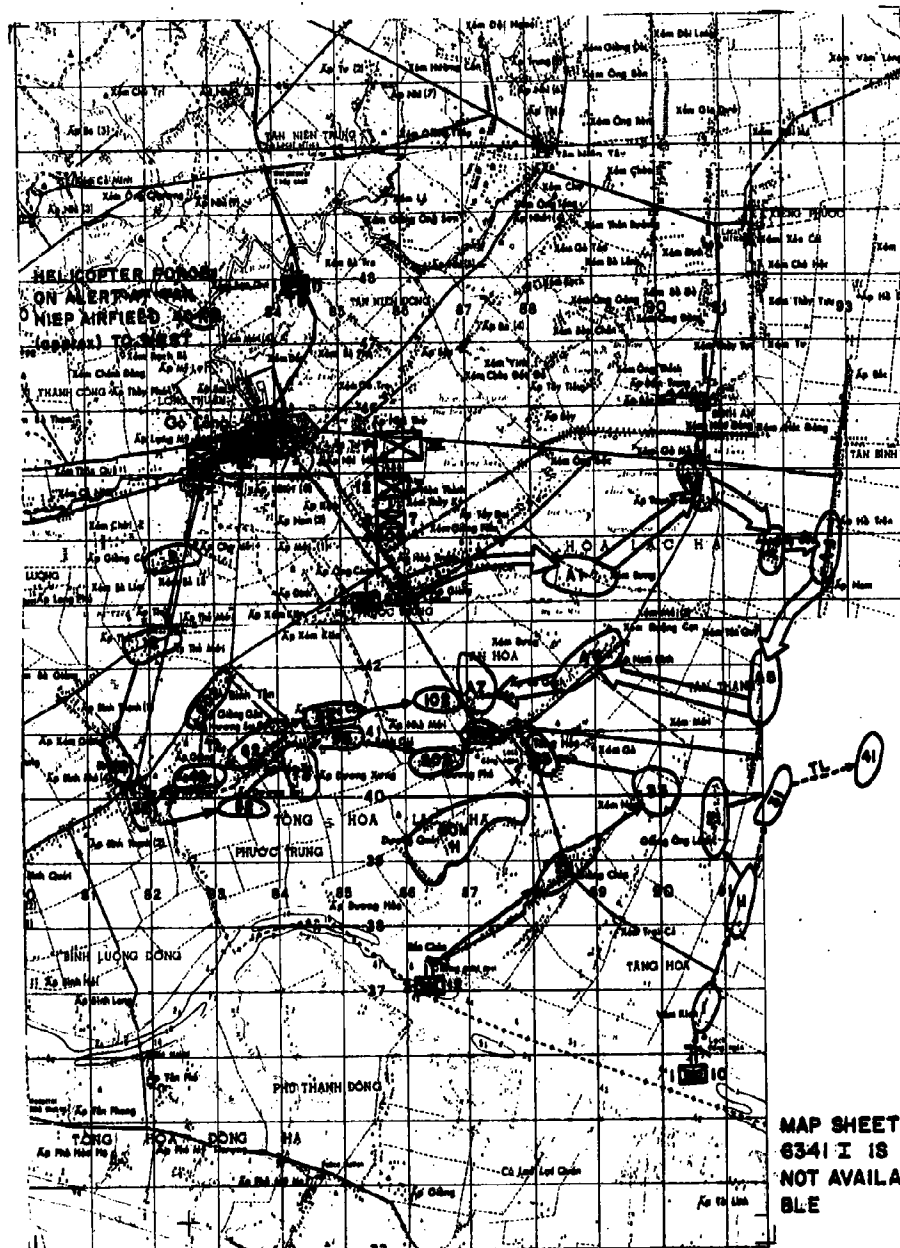


FIGURE 26. (U)

Second day, five km southeast of Go Cong.
 Map: Vietnam, 1:50,000
 Sheets 6341 I, II, 6342 II, III
 Series L701

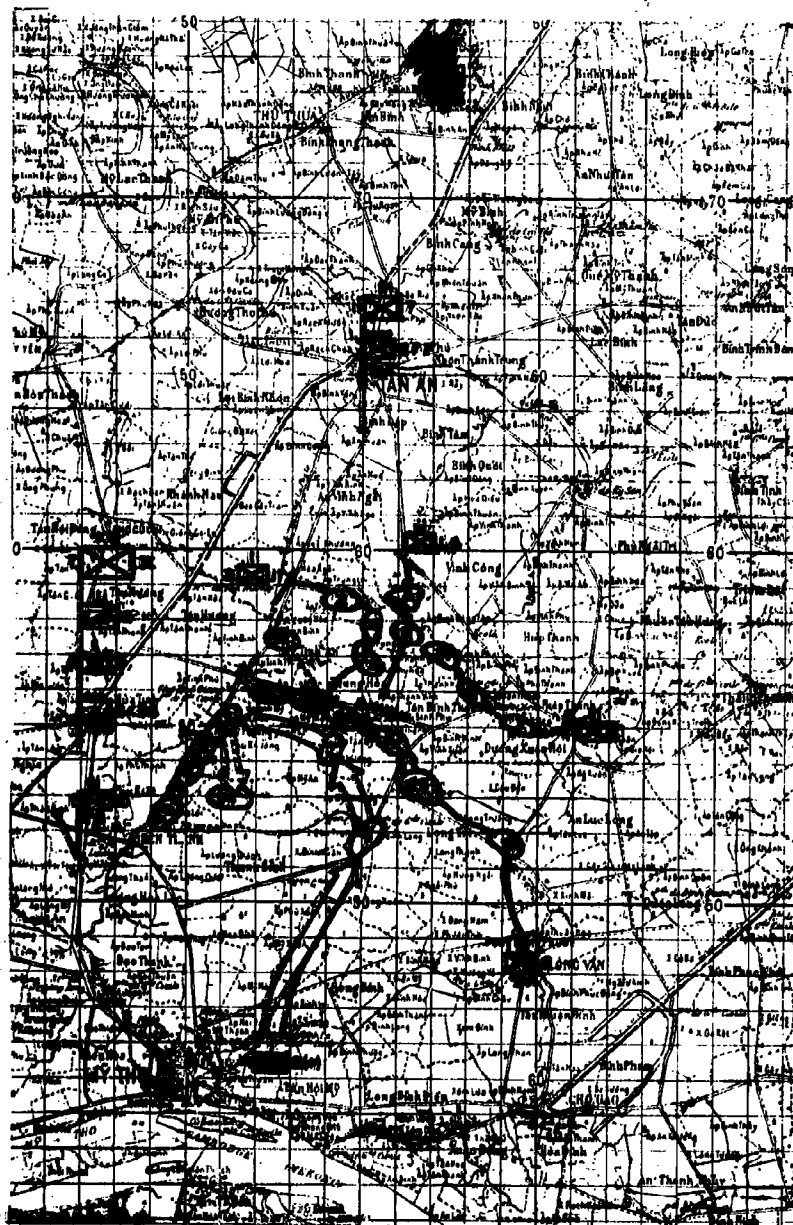


FIGURE 28 (U)

Fourth day, seven km east of Ben Tranh.
 Map: Vietnam, 1:100,000, My Tho
 Sheet 2293
 Series 1605

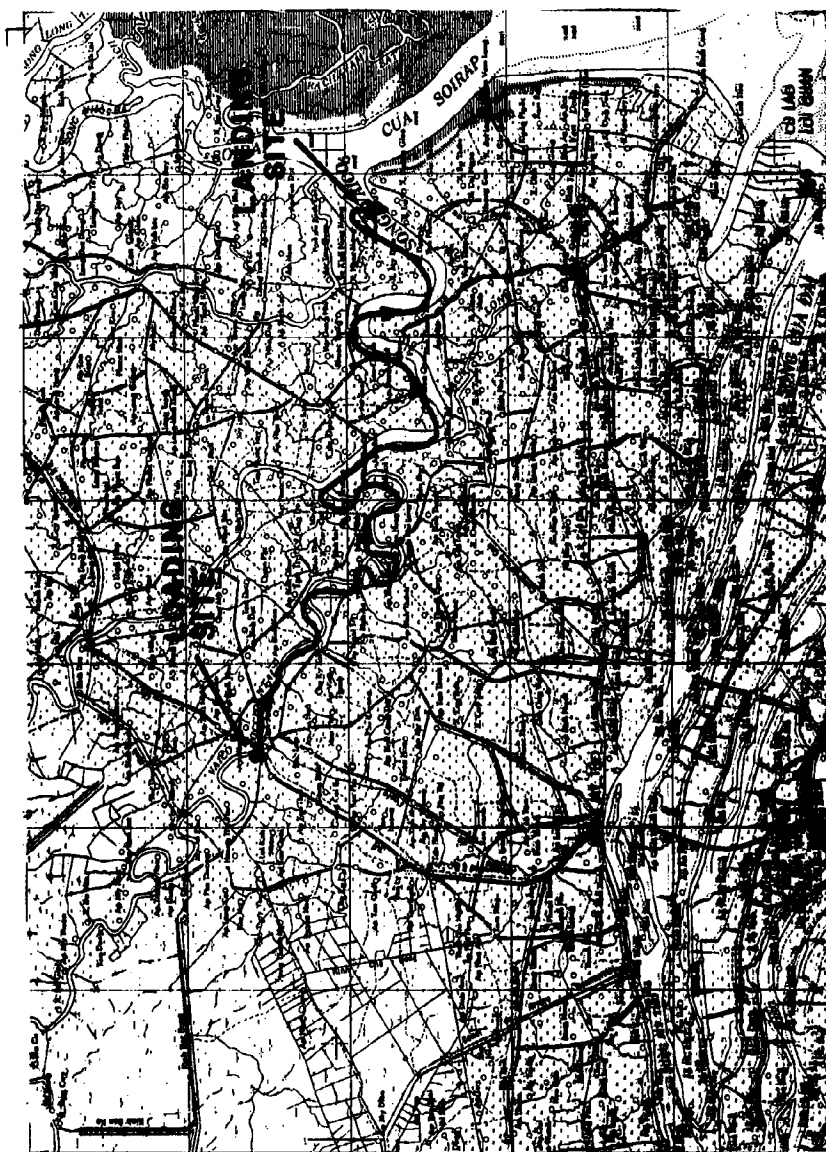


FIGURE 29 (U)

Course of landing craft, vicinity My Tho/Go Cong.
Map: Vietnam, 1:250,000, Saigon
Sheet NC48-7
Series L509



FIGURE 30 (U)
LCU's prepare to off-load.



FIGURE 31 (U)
This LCU experienced difficulty in selecting a suitable
landing site.



FIGURE 32 (U)
The M-113 was left at this location and retrieved four hours later.



FIGURE 33 (U)
Infantrymen cutting and placing brush as an aid to traction for M-113's during off-loading from LCU's.

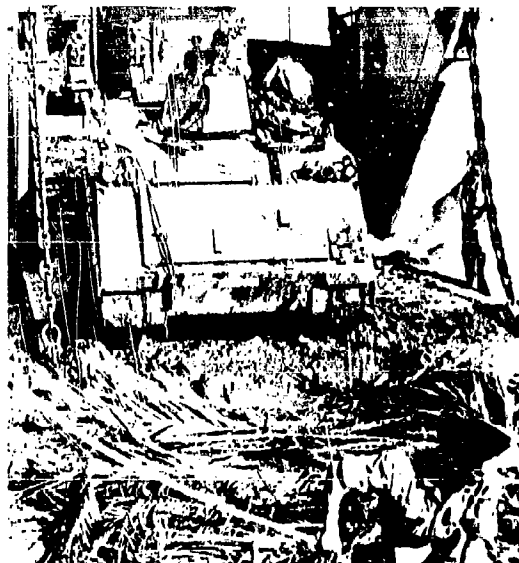


FIGURE 34 (U)
Brushfill placed in front of ramp.



FIGURE 35 (U)
Use of barge aluminum as a pushbar to assist the
M-113's in negotiating the muddy shore.



FIGURE 36 (U)
Daisy-chain method of pushing M-113's. Note the
pushbar on the forward slope of the M-113.



FIGURE 37 (U)
Attached ranger company providing waiting security
for the M-113 off-loading.



FIGURE 38 (U)
Troop moving toward objective D.



FIGURE 39 (U)
View of objective E as seen from troop commander's M-113.



FIGURE 40 (U)
Objective G.



FIGURE 41 (U)
Objective 4.



FIGURE 42 (U)
A suspect found in a rice paddy by an M-113 crew.

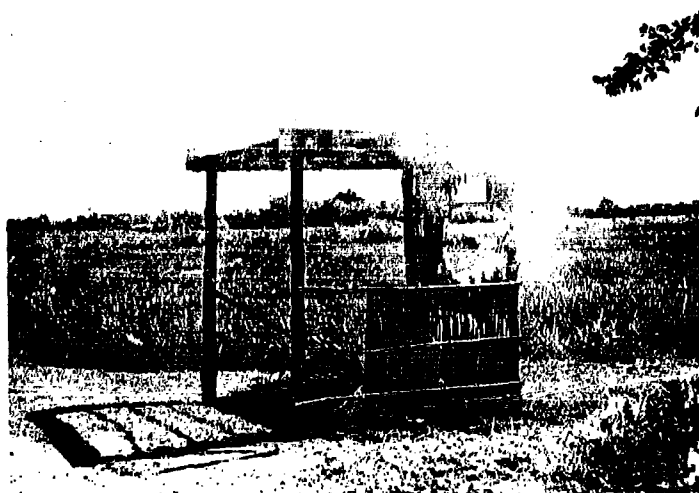


FIGURE 43 (U)
Viet Cong information booth being destroyed by 4/2
Troop at objective A-4.



FIGURE 44 (U)
4/2 Troop approaching objective A-5. Note the
infantrymen dismounting from the M-113's.



FIGURE 45 (U)
Objective A-7.



FIGURE 46 (U)
M-113 being driven by troop commander.



FIGURE 47 (U)
M-113 being pulled into the canal bank.



FIGURE 48 (U)
Crew preparing the capstan-anchor method of recovery.

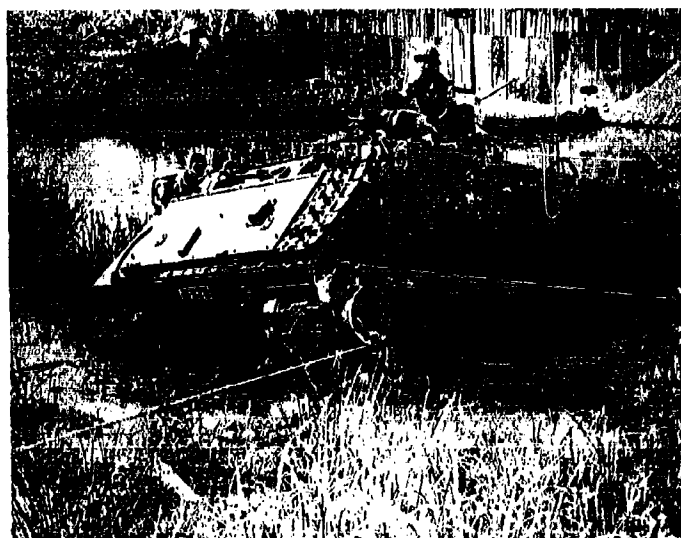


FIGURE 49 (U)
Vehicle recovers itself from the canal.



FIGURE 50 (U)
M-113 with broken left idler.



FIGURE 51 (U)
M-113's approaching objective 4. Note infantrymen
preparing to dismount the M-113's.



FIGURE 52 (U)
4/2 Troop 81mm mortars shelling objective 14.



FIGURE 53 (U)
VNAF fighter-bomber aircraft (B-26) strafing
objective 14.



FIGURE 54 (U)
Objective 14 being bombed.



FIGURE 55 (U)
Suspect being apprehended.

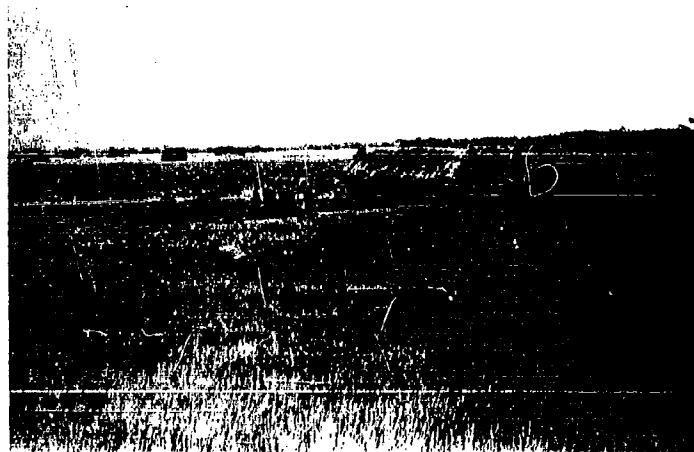


FIGURE 56 (U)
Suspect shown in figure 55 entered this hut momentarily
before surrendering.



FIGURE 57 (U)
Suspects being loaded on M-113.

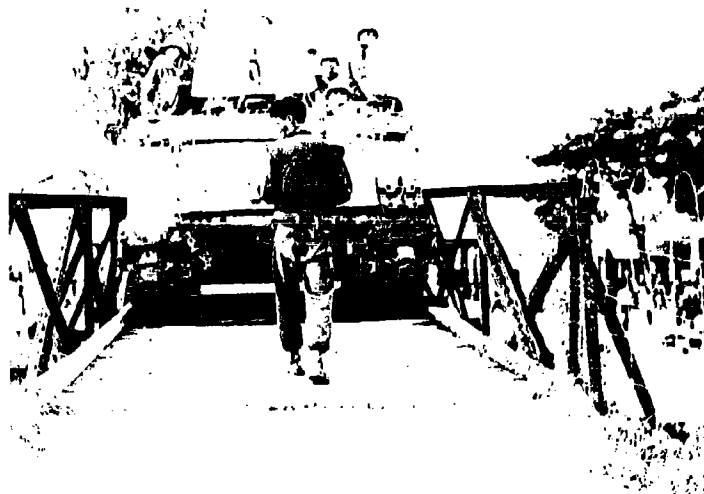


FIGURE 58 (U)
M-113 crossing one of the typical bridges of South
Vietnam. This bridge has a classification of
three tons. Note the width.



FIGURE 59 (U)
A cut road which led into a VC hamlet.



FIGURE 60 (U)
M-113's negotiating a typical VC roadblock.



FIGURE 61 (U)
Infantry dismounting from M-113's to clear a VC hamlet.



FIGURE 62 (U)
M-113 crew preparing balk aluminum bridging as an
expedient to assist the M-113's in crossing a
canal.

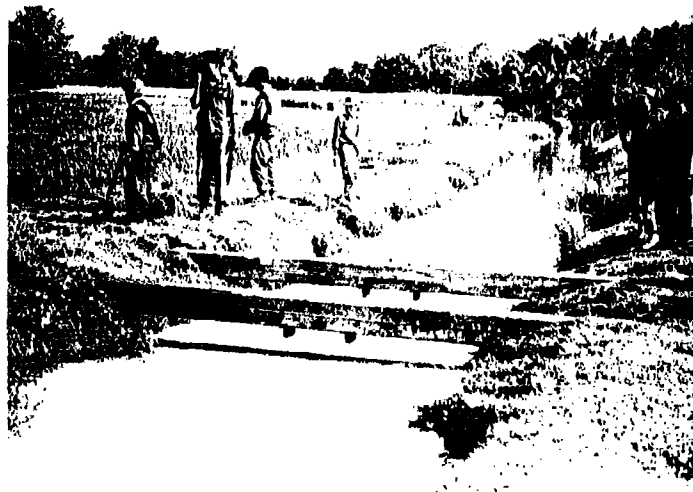


FIGURE 63 (U)
Balk aluminum bridging prepared for M-113 crossing.



FIGURE 64 (U)
The first M-113 of twelve crosses the canal.

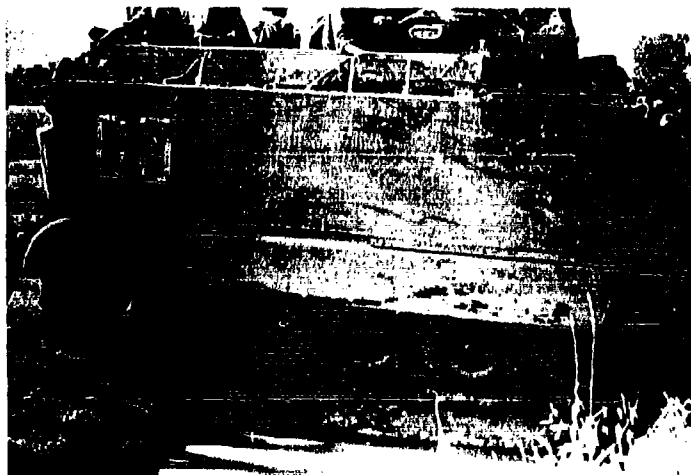


FIGURE 65 (U)
The last of the twelve M-113's crosses canal. Note
how much the bridging has settled in comparison
to figure 64.

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V. OPERATION IN VICINITY OF HOA DONG (VINH BINH)

A. (U) GENERAL

The 4th Mechanized Rifle Troop, 2d Armored Cavalry Squadron (hereafter referred to as 4/2 Troop) participated in search and clear operations approximately three kilometers southwest of Hoa Dong (Vinh Binh) (XS 735435) during the period 041400 to 051830 December 1963.

B. (U) PARTICIPATING UNITS

1. 7th Infantry Division Headquarters
2. Dinh Tuong Province Headquarters
3. 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment (hereafter referred to as the 1/11 Battalion)
4. 3d Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment (hereafter referred to as the 3/12 Battalion)
5. 4/2 Troop
6. 352d Ranger Company
7. 172d Civil Guard Company
8. 19th Civil Guard River Patrol Company
9. One platoon, 155mm howitzer, 35th Artillery
10. One platoon, 4.2 inch mortars, 7th Division
11. One B-26, two AD-6's, and one O-1 aircraft

C. (C) MISSION

4/2 Troop attached to the 1/11 Battalion for a search and clear operation. Kill or capture VC in area of operation.

D. (C) CONCEPT OF OPERATION

The 4/2 Troop assists the 1/11 Battalion to search and clear successive objectives west of the Rach Go Canal. The 3/12 Battalion, the 352d Ranger Company, and the 172d Civil Guard Company occupy blocking positions in the vicinity of Cua Tieu River south of the operation area (figure 66).

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E. (C) RESULTS

1. Friendly losses:

- 1) 4/2 Troop - three WIA and two M-113's damaged by 57mm recoilless rifle
- 2) 1/11 Battalion - two KIA
- 3) 352d Ranger Company - one KIA

2. Enemy losses: Unknown

F. (C) HIGHLIGHTS

Prior to receipt of the mission the troop was engaged in evacuating an M-113 flamethrower vehicle that had been destroyed by VC 75mm and 57mm recoilless rifles during an engagement the previous day. Upon completion of this task the troop had orders to return to My Tho and then move to Saigon to receive honors for their participation in the 1 November 1963 military coup d'etat. At 1000 hours General Tran Von Don, then Chief of Staff, Army of the Republic of Vietnam, accompanied by the III Corps and 7th Infantry Division commanders and members of the press, visited the scene of the previous day's engagement in the vicinity of Than Nhut Post (XS 673410). The General's party inspected the battle area and decorated members of the 4/2 Troop and other ARVN military personnel involved in the operation which had resulted in the capture of a 75mm recoilless rifle from the Viet Cong. Just prior to the departure of General Don's party at 1100 hours, verbal orders were issued attaching the 4/2 Troop to the 1/11 Battalion for participation in an operation with an LD time of 1400 hours.

The 4/2 Troop had not been resupplied with ammunition or fuel since participating in the previous day's operation and they were low on both. The troop commander immediately requested resupply and indicated the urgency of his situation in view of the 1400 hour LD time. Even though by 1435 hours no additional fuel or ammunition had arrived, the 4/2 Troop departed for the LD with six M-113's. The remainder were deadlined or being used by troops who were dismantling the destroyed M-113 flamethrower.

At approximately 1530 hours the troop joined the 1/11 Battalion. Forward elements of the battalion were in contact with about two VC companies. The 1/11 Battalion had two infantry companies advancing in column along the tree line approximately 500 meters south of objective A-6. The remainder were in reserve deployed along a dike in the rice paddies approximately 600 meters west of the tree line in rear of the two companies moving on objective A-6. The 4/2 Troop commander was briefed on the situation and alerted for employment against the VC.

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Sporadic small arms fire was being placed on the battalion reserve from the tree line to the right flank (in rear of the troop in contact) by a diversionary force of local guerrillas (figure 67). Shortly thereafter, the infantry company in contact received a heavy volume of automatic weapons fire from the vicinity of objective A-6. At approximately 1600 hours the 4/2 Troop was directed to assault objective A-6. Elements of the 1/11 Battalion in contact were reported pinned down. The 1/11 Battalion had made no attempt to develop the battle area or commit the reserve company. The 4/2 Troop still had not received resupply of ammunition or fuel and therefore were not capable of launching a sustained attack with their six M-113's. They had only about 30 men available for employment as dismounted infantry. Nevertheless the 4/2 Troop commander complied with the attack order.

In order to position the troop for attack it was necessary to cross a canal approximately 1000 meters from the objective. The troop experienced some delay in accomplishing this crossing, primarily because this was the first operation of the newly assigned troop commander. He was not experienced with M-113 operations in the delta. His US counterpart came to his aid and advised him on how best to make the crossing. During this period an air strike employing napalm and HE bombs was in progress against the objective. The air strike was 500 meters north of the objective and hit too deep inside the tree line to be effective against dug-in VC positions. Upon termination of the air strike the troop was joined by two additional M-113's carrying resupply of ammunition but no fuel. Ammunition was distributed to the carriers and at 1800 hours the 4/2 Troop launched their attack with eight carriers on line. The forward progress of the 1/11 Infantry Company in contact had previously been marked by smoke on the tree line to establish a no-fire line to protect friendly infantry from the 4/2 Troop machine gun fire. The troop attacked on a narrow front with carriers as close as 15 to 20 yards apart. They placed a heavy volume of machine gun fire on the objective area as they moved in a frontal assault across the rice paddies. Approximately 150 meters from the tree line the VC opened fire with automatic weapons and a 57mm recoilless rifle. The first round from the VC 57mm recoilless rifle passed to the right of the command M-113 and landed in the rice paddy about 100 feet to the rear. Several carriers immediately closed on the recoilless rifle position and placed all possible machine gun fire on its estimated location.

Although it was approximately 1830 hours and already quite dark, the flash from the backblast of the recoilless rifle could not be detected nor its location pin-pointed. When the lead M-113 was about 50 meters from the tree line it was hit in the front slope. Other carriers closed in on the position as a second round from the 57mm recoilless rifle hit the same M-113 making a spectacular explosion and sending molten particles of metal high into the air. Movement was difficult in the area directly in front of the recoilless rifle position because a small canal blocked entrance into the objective. Moments later, while attempting

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to maneuver through the area and overrun the gun position, a second carrier was hit on the front slope by a 57mm round. VC automatic weapons fire was still too intense to risk dismounting the few organic riflemen. As one of the M-113's was hit for the third time, the troop commander withdrew out of range of the VC 57mm recoilless rifle and requested artillery fire on the position. This request was denied by the CP for fear of hitting forward elements of the 1/11 Battalion which were reported to be in close contact. This was obviously not true as the smoke previously used to establish the infantry forward position was well to the rear of the no-fire line. At 1900 hours the 4/2 Troop commander withdrew five of his carriers to a point approximately 800 meters from the tree line. At this time there were three carriers still remaining in the vicinity of the VC position, two disabled from the 57mm recoilless rifle fire and one, it was later learned, out of gasoline.

Shortly thereafter the 1/11 Battalion broke contact and withdrew to take a position to the rear of the 4/2 Troop along a dike. The 1/11 Battalion reserve had previously moved into a wooded area and joined the other two companies. This move was made to escape a diversionary VC force which had opened fire on them from the rear. The 4/2 Troop mortars were employed at this time primarily to defend the three inoperable carriers from VC dismounted attack. Mortar rounds and cal .30 MG fire was directed periodically around the disabled M-113's. Mortars were not previously employed to support the attack.

Additional requests for artillery and air support were denied. The ground forces were unable to provide the visual direction and distance marker for directing the air strike. The 4/2 Troop commander requested that an infantry company be attached to assist him in a night attack. It was finally agreed by the 1/11 Battalion commander that a ranger company would be attached for this purpose.

Several hours later a ranger company (-), consisting of 55 rangers and 14 civil guard arrived and was attached to the 4/2 Troop. Much discussion ensued between the 4/2 Troop commander, the 1/11 Battalion commander, and the ranger company commander until it was finally agreed upon to support the operation with an additional company from the 1/11 Battalion.

At approximately 0030 hours, plans were completed for the ranger company (-) plus one company of infantry from the 1/11 Battalion to support the 4/2 Troop attack. Illumination was requested and at 0130 hours an aircraft commenced dropping flares and the 4/2 Troop moved out toward the objective with five carriers. This time at the insistence of his American advisor, the troop commander employed his 81mm mortars in support of the attack. The attached ranger troop followed in column approximately 200 meters in rear of the M-113's. Upon approaching the vicinity of the disabled M-113's, the 4/2 Troop opened fire on the objective. The attached and supporting infantry squatted where they were

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in the rice paddies. In view of the inertia displayed by the infantry, the 4/2 Troop commander ordered available men of his troop to dismount and move forward to the disabled carriers and attempt to secure the area. They immediately complied, occupied the disabled M-113's and manned the machine guns for an additional base of fire. No VC fire was received from the objective area. It was apparent that the VC had left, but no effort was made by supporting infantry to occupy the area. The 4/2 Troop commander sent his M-113's forward and towed the disabled vehicles to the rear. It took four M-113's to pull the one nearest the objective area out of the mud. The 4/2 Troop and the infantry withdrew to their original position until daylight. They occupied the objective at 0715 hours unopposed. The VC had withdrawn.

Immediately upon occupation of the objective area a detailed inspection was made. The position was well planned and constructed to meet the attack of the 4/2 Troop from the front and to block the infantry advancing through the tree line on the left flank. All fox holes and gun emplacements were just a few meters inside the tree line and had been elaborately prepared with built-up mud parapets. The 57mm recoilless rifle position was approximately five feet deep by eight feet wide with a built-up mud parapet approximately four feet thick at the base. Fifty meters from this position there was a cal .30 MG emplacement with two fire lanes cut in the parapet, one covering the 57mm recoilless rifle from dismounted infantry attack and the other to the left flank along the tree line directly into the 1/11 Battalion approach of the previous day. Two dead ARVN soldiers from the 1/11 Battalion, who had been killed the previous evening, were found approximately 75 meters in front of this gun emplacement. A network of one and two-man foxholes were constructed around the position which followed the tree line in a semicircle. This position was capable of countering an attack from the left flank and the front. It was vulnerable, however, to attack from the right flank and was quite open to the rear. Several of the foxholes had been used as BAR emplacements as evidenced by the imprint of the bipod in the mud parapets. No weapons, VC dead, or 57mm shell cases were found; however a large amount of spent cal .30 and carbine cartridges were on the ground by the foxholes and machine gun emplacements. One cal .30 armor-piercing round was found.

During this period five more M-113's joined the 4/2 Troop from the squadron bringing with them a resupply of fuel and ammunition. At 1000 hours, the ARVN killed and wounded were evacuated by UH-1B helicopter and at 1245 hours the 4/2 Troop received repair parts, dropped by O-1 aircraft, for the two disabled M-113's.

At 1430 hours orders were received to continue the attack. The troop moved out with eight M-113's leaving the remaining operational ones to secure and evacuate the disabled vehicles still undergoing repair. At 1600 hours, objective A-8 was secure.

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The mud in front of A-10 was too deep to support the M-113's. Several bogged down and had to be towed back to more substantial terrain. The 4/2 Troop commander notified the 1/11 Battalion commander that he could not support an assault on objective A-10 and the operation was terminated. The 4/2 Troop was ordered to assemble at the Than Nhut Post (XS 673416) to recover the destroyed M-113 flamethrower and evacuate it to My Tho.

At 1930 hours, as the troop approached the post, they were ambushed by an unknown number of guerrilla snipers. The troop returned fire, called for illumination through artillery channels, and continued to move. Illumination was provided almost immediately by an aircraft in the area and within 10 minutes the troop had moved through the ambush.

The troop closed in the assembly area and bivouacked for the night. The following morning, recovery of the destroyed M-113 flamethrower was completed at 1200 hours and they closed My Tho garrison at 1300 hours.

The effects of 57mm recoilless rifle hits on the two disabled M-113's were as follows:

1) On the M-113 that received one hit from the 57mm recoilless rifle, the HEAT round penetrated the lower right front slope at the bottom of the trim vane, penetrated the engine compartment, destroyed the engine harness, and damaged the radiator. This carrier was deadlined for engine replacement.

2) On the M-113 that received three hits from the 57mm recoilless rifle HEAT rounds, the first round destroyed the lower left portion of the trim vane but did not penetrate the forward slope of the vehicle. The second round hit the lower side of the forward slope, dented the surface, but made no direct penetration. The third round struck the upper left center of the forward slope, penetrated the engine compartment, and damaged the radiator, rectifier, and air cleaner. This vehicle was operational one week after receiving the damage.

3) Three crew members of these vehicles were slightly wounded.

G. (C) FAVORABLE COMMENTS

Though inexperienced in delta operations, the new troop commander displayed aggressiveness and willingness to close with the enemy.

H. (C) UNFAVORABLE COMMENTS

The 1/11 Battalion failed to completely develop the battle area. They neither established an effective base of fire, nor maneuvered the main body to the rear or deep flank of the VC in contact. The 1/11 Battalion never committed their reserve. Instead, the 4/2 Troop, which

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was in short supply of ammunition and fuel and understrength in personnel, was diverted to make the attack. The 1/11 Battalion did not support the 4/2 Troop. The 1/11 Battalion broke contact and allowed the VC to withdraw unmolested from an area in which the enemy could have been encircled and destroyed. The battalion demonstrated extremely low morale and no will to close with the enemy.

The air strike on objective A-6 missed the VC defensive area by approximately 500 meters.

The 4/2 Troop request for artillery support on objective A-6, after they were hit by the 57mm recoilless rifle fire, should have been approved. If the CP estimated that the 1/11 Battalion was too close to the VC position to safely fire the mission the battalion could have been withdrawn far enough to make the mission safe to fire. The withdrawal could have been accomplished, as the 1/11 Battalion broke contact with the VC on their own volition shortly thereafter. Even then no artillery was approved to support another attack by the 4/2 Troop.

In their initial attack the 4/2 Troop advanced on too narrow a front (15 to 20 meters between carriers), limiting their ability to exploit weak spots in the VC defense and exposing too many vehicles to the same 57mm recoilless rifle.

The failure to provide adequate planning and resupply for the 4/2 Troop on 4 December (LD time of 1400 hours) was courting disaster. Most of the M-113's employed in the attack of objective A-6 at 1800 hours expended nearly all of their remaining gasoline during the attack. One ran out of gasoline directly in front of, and in range of, the VC 57mm recoilless rifle.

The 3/12 Battalion was subjected to a heavy volume of cal .50 and .30 MG fire from the 4/2 Troop during the attack of objective A-6. Failure to realize that the 3/12 Battalion was in the direct line of fire of the attacking 4/2 Troop was a serious miscalculation.

The artillery observer with the 4/2 Troop had no artillery fire support plan. It is not known if there was a fire support plan.

In employing their mortars, the 4/2 Troop did not use aiming stakes, did not place their weapons in parallel or fire effectively in battery. Their rate of fire was generally too slow to gain maximum effect from TOT and did not effectively cover the target area. The M-10 plotting board was not used. As usual, some of their mortars were left in garrison and those that were brought to the field were set up too close together.

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I. (C) OBSERVATIONS

The most important factor in the engagement was the failure of field commanders to observe the principle of fire and maneuver, rather than fire then maneuver (or no base of fire at all).

Lack of support by massed artillery (TOT) or mortar fire probably caused the failure of the assault.

The 4/2 Troop should not have been committed against this objective (a strongly defended, dug-in VC position) without supply of fuel, attached infantry, and supporting artillery or mortar fire. The troop was understrength in carriers and personnel. It was improbable under the above circumstances that a successful attack could have been launched by the 4/2 Troop regardless of the excellence of maneuver or courage of the troops.

The VC habitually fail to prepare their positions for perimeter defense and are vulnerable to attack from the rear. Employment of encircling tactics against VC dug-in positions to strike at their rear will force them to establish a perimeter defense, thereby forcing them to distribute fire power over a wider area and lessening their capability to concentrate heavy fire in any one direction.

The 3/12 Battalion was the appropriate unit to have assaulted objective A-6. The battalion was ideally located to assault across the main canal into the rear of the VC, under cover of flanking fire from the 1/11 Battalion (figure 67). The 1/11 Battalion also could have enveloped the right flank of objective A-6 and then attack from the rear. Advantage was not taken of an excellent opportunity to inflict heavy casualties on the defending VC.

Failure to conduct detailed critiques of each combat operation results in recurring errors on the part of commanders and staff officers at all levels. Re-enactment of poorly conducted actions, pointing out errors, and stressing the proper tactics and procedures would provide valuable training and help preclude repetitious failures.

The effect of close air support would be greatly enhanced by using ground observers as well as aerial observers who would pinpoint targets of opportunity in support of the ground effort.

Priority of fires to the assaulting unit, with the capability of quickly shifting previously planned fires to cover insurgent routes of withdrawal, would greatly enhance possibilities of destroying the insurgent forces.

Insurgent defensive positions are normally selected with a canal barrier immediately in front of the position. Individual and crew-served

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weapon positions are well constructed, camouflaged, and selected to take advantage of the terrain.

The principle of fire and movement achieves increased significance in M-113 counterinsurgency operations. Failure to exploit the mobility differential enjoyed over the insurgent force results in loss of the shock effect characteristic of armor operations.

Failure to plan for continuation of operations after hours of darkness results in loss of contact and facilitates escape of the insurgent force. Twenty-four hour continuity in CP operation is essential.

The M-113 is an extremely effective carrier for transporting infantry to assault positions, and under most circumstances in Vietnam it is capable of assaulting insurgent positions.

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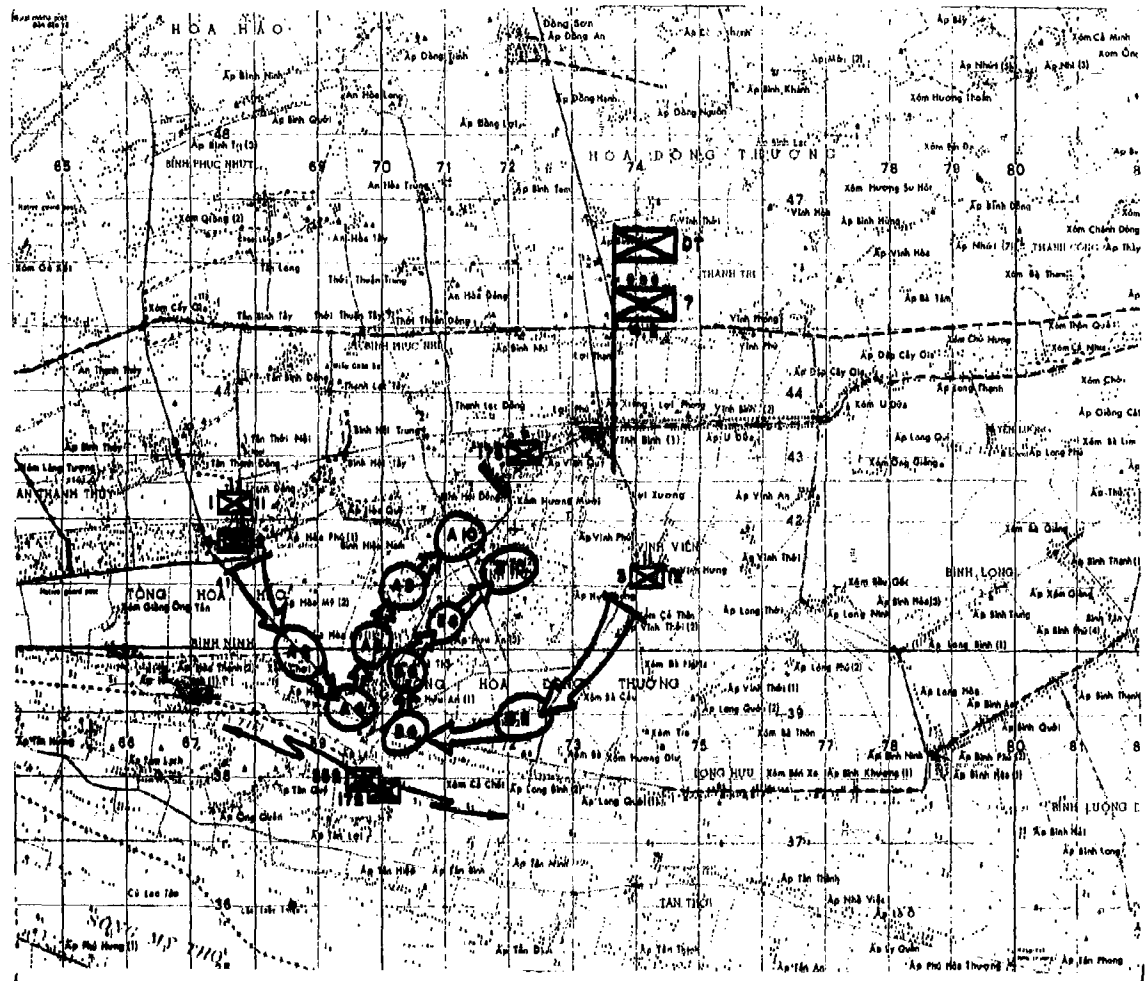


FIGURE 66 (U)

Plan of Operation Hoa Dong (Vinh Binh)
Map: Vietnam, 1:50,000, Go Cong and Binh Dai
Sheets: 6342 III and 6341 IV
Series L701

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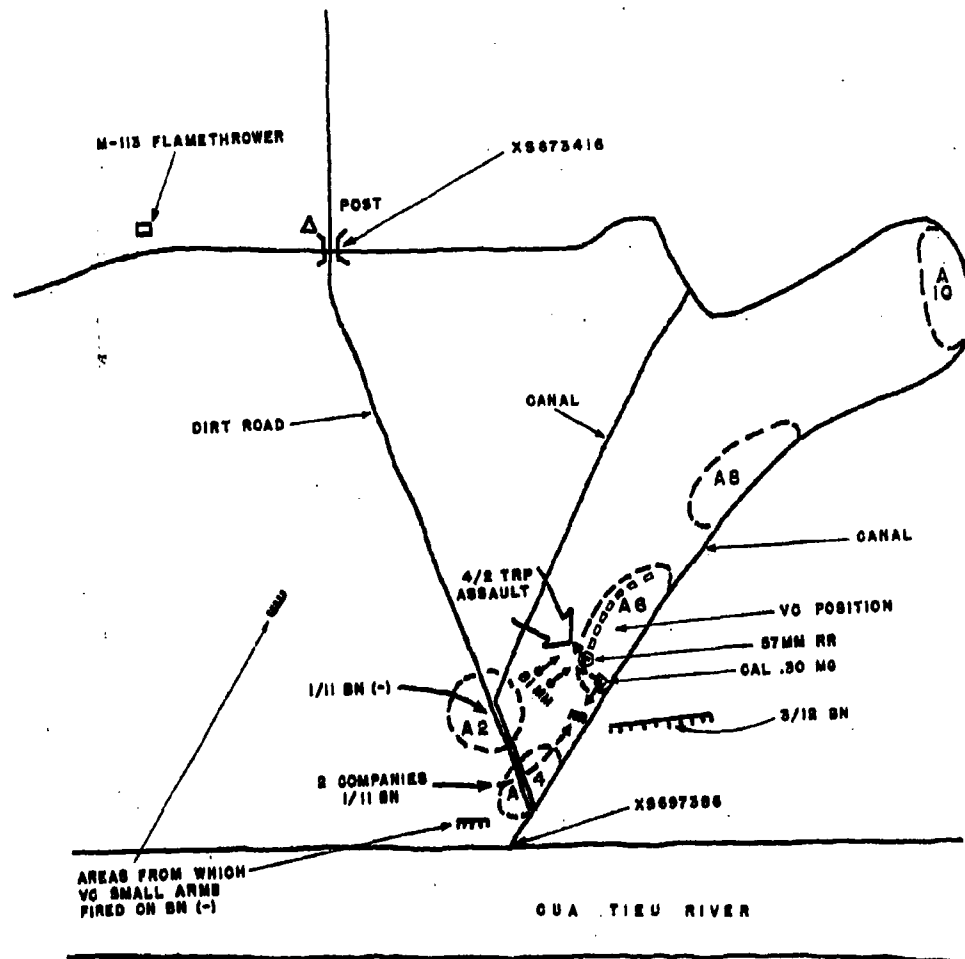


FIGURE 67 (U)
Detailed plan of operation, Hoa Dung (Vinh Binh).
Not to scale.

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FIGURE 68 (U)
Gun emplacement for the 75mm recoilless rifle that
destroyed the M-113 flamethrower



FIGURE 69 (U)
Looking toward destroyed flamethrower from 75mm
recoilless rifle emplacement.

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FIGURE 70 (C)
Destroyed flamethrower showing penetration in front
slope from 75mm recoilless rifle.



FIGURE 71 (C)
Another view of the M-113 flamethrower.

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FIGURE 72 (C)
Close-up of destroyed flamethrower looking toward
front slope.



FIGURE 73 (U)
75mm recoilless rifle and ammunition captured from VC.

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FIGURE 74 (U)
Viet Cong 75mm recoilless rifle crew member KIA.



FIGURE 75 (U)
Viet Cong KIA.



FIGURE 76 (U)
General Tran Von Don and party inspect battle area.



FIGURE 77 (U)
General Tran Von Don decorating members of 4/2 Troop.



FIGURE 78 (U)
Objective A-6.



FIGURE 79 (U)
Air strike hits too far north of objective A-6.

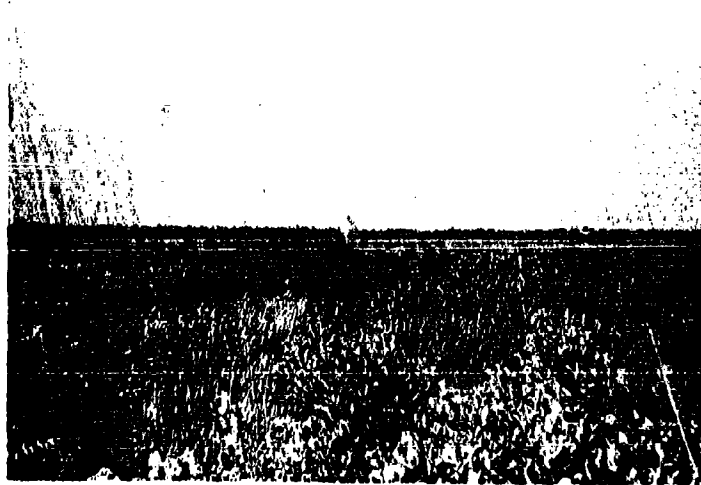


FIGURE 80 (U)
1/11 Battalion marks their forward position with smoke.



FIGURE 81 (U)
4/2 Troop closing in on objective A-6.



FIGURE 82 (U)
57mm recoilless rifle emplacement at objective A-6.



FIGURE 83 (U)
Two-man foxhole used for BAR at objective A-6.



FIGURE 84 (U)
Typical one-man foxhole at objective A-6.



FIGURE 85 (U)
Close-up of VC cal .30 MG emplacement.



FIGURE 86 (U)
Trail on which 1/11 Battalion troops approached
objective A-6. Soldiers are standing
in front of VC cal .30 MG emplacement.

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VI. OPERATION IN VICINITY OF VINH CHAU

A. (U) GENERAL

The 5th Mechanized Troop, 2d Armored Cavalry Squadron (hereafter referred to as the 5/2 Troop) participated in an operation (Dan Chi 201) in the vicinity of Vinh Chau (XR 0831) during the period 12 to 13 December 1963. This operation was under the control of the 32d Infantry Regiment. Although no significant tactical results were obtained during this operation, it is felt that the action of the 5/2 Troop was important because they maneuvered through a mangrove-palmetto area which previously had never been successfully negotiated by M-113 units.

B. (U) PARTICIPATING UNITS

1. 32d Infantry Regiment
2. 3d Battalion, 32d Infantry
3. 5/2 Troop
4. Ranger company
5. 3d Company, 32d Infantry (attached to 5/2 Troop)
6. Howitzer battery (105mm), 32d Infantry
7. Canine scout platoon
8. Mortar section (4.2 inch), 21st Artillery
9. Engineer Section

C. (C) MISSION

Search and clear area of VC infiltrators.

D. (C) CONCEPT OF OPERATION

The 5/2 Troop attacks on assigned axis (figure 87) followed by an infantry battalion, with attached engineers and scout dogs, to conduct a thorough search of the area of operations. The ranger company attacks on a separate axis to form a blocking base against which attacking armor drives the VC.

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E. (C) RESULTS

No friendly or enemy personnel or materiel losses.

F. (C) HIGHLIGHTS

The 5/2 Troop consisting of 12 M-113's and 110 men departed Bac Lieu, its home station, at 120615 December enroute to Vinh Chau. Upon arrival at Vinh Chau at 0745, the troop commander received order for the operation and the attachment of an infantry company.

At 0830 the troop departed Vinh Chau enroute to objective 1 where canal crossings were made. Figures 88 to 95 depict the expedients used to cross the canals.

At 1430 the troop departed objective 1 enroute to objective 3.

Upon arrival at objective 3 at 1500 (figures 96 and 97), they were ordered to remain at that location for the night. The troop commander waited until darkness to place his M-113's in proper positions for effective night defense.

At 130830 December, the troop departed objective 3 enroute to objective 7. However, they did not follow the assigned route through objective 5. Instead, the troop commander deviated in an attempt to negotiate the mangrove area further to the southeast and then swing back into objective 7. The area, typical of most mangroves within the delta region, consists of salt-fresh water swamps and marshes, and is diurnally or perennially inundated. Movement through mangroves is usually prevented by deep water and miry ground. The top crust of the ground in this area, however, supported the M-113's and the troop maneuvered through without incident. Figures 98 to 102 depict the troop moving through the marsh.

Objective 7 was searched at 0915, and the troop remained in the area of operations until 1800 to act as security until the infantry had departed and was enroute to Vinh Chau.

G. (C) FAVORABLE COMMENTS

The 5/2 Troop commander displayed aggressiveness and initiative in maneuvering his troop through the mangrove area. He proved that this type of area can be negotiated by M-113's. However, it must be pointed out that the marsh was crossed during the dry season when harvesting of rice was being conducted in the surrounding rice paddies.

H. (C) UNFAVORABLE COMMENTS

An engineer section was to follow the troop and use organic mine detectors to search for hidden enemy weapons and equipment. However,

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the engineers were never observed using the detectors. Furthermore, though the 5/2 Troop was equipped with TOE mine detectors, they were left at the home station.

A canine scout platoon was also to have been used in the searching operation. Shortly after the operation started, however, it was learned that the scout dogs would not be available. They were to be transported by air from Pleiku, but these instructions were changed because the dogs might become airsick.

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FIGURE 87 (U)

Plan of Operation Vinh Chau
Map: Vietnam, 1:100,000, Soc Trang and Vinh Chau
Sheets 239W and 243
Series L605

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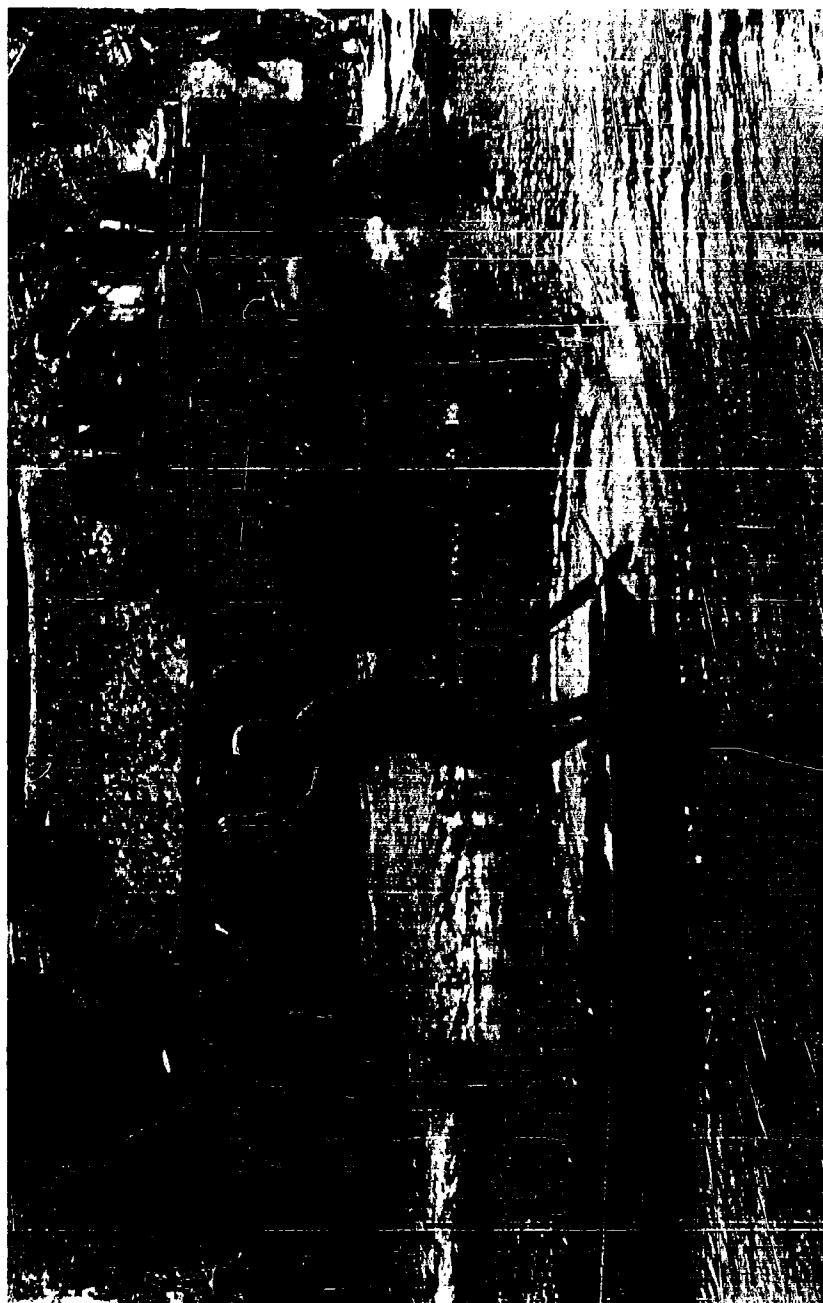


FIGURE 88 (v)
A reconnaissance is being conducted to determine the best canal crossing site.



FIGURE 89 (U)
The M-113 swims to the opposite bank.

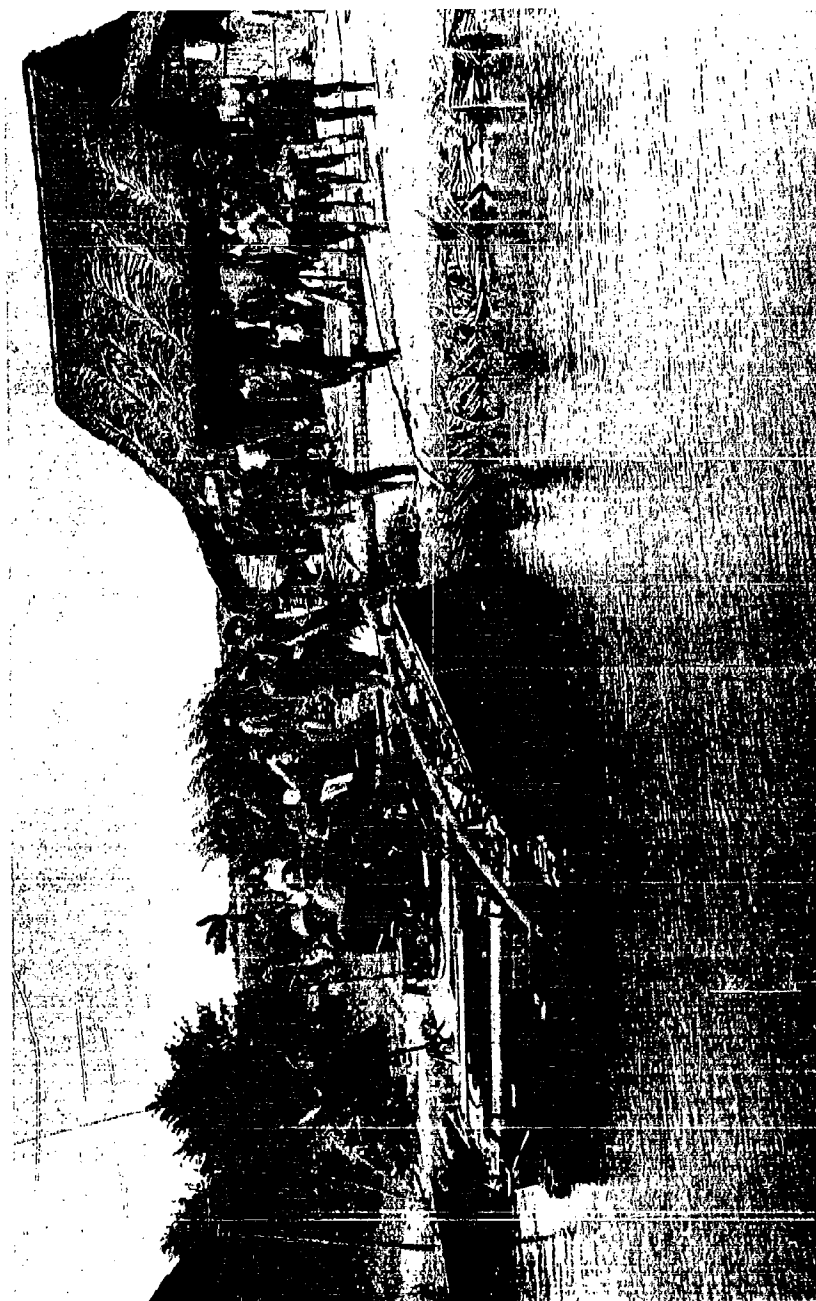


FIGURE 90 (U)
A rifle squad preparing a capstan-anchor recovery.



FIGURE 91 (U)
The M-113 starts to recover itself.

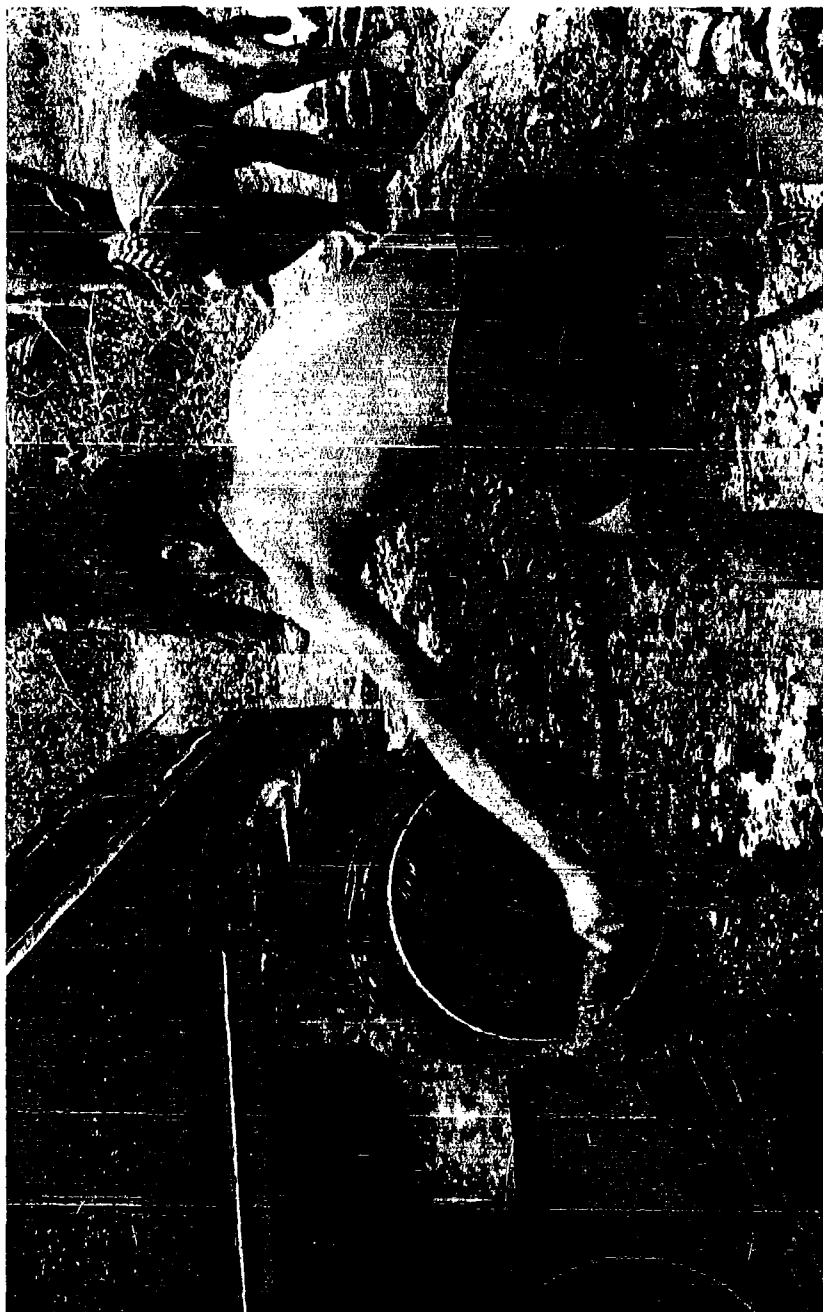


FIGURE 92 (U)
The nylon rope is removed from the capstan.



FIGURE 93 (U)
Enroute to objective 3, another canal is encountered.



FIGURE 94 (U)
The M-113 had to be guided by rope to the bank since the tide had developed a swift current.



FIGURE 95 (U)
The first M-113 across acts as tow vehicle.



FIGURE 96 (U)
The troop approaches objective 3.



FIGURE 97 (U)
Objective 3 has been secured.



FIGURE 98 (U)
The mangrove-palmetto area.



FIGURE 99 (U)
The troop moving through the mangrove-palmetto.



FIGURE 100 (U)
The darker holes in the foreground are "ponji" traps containing bamboo spikes
which endanger foot troops.



FIGURE 101 (U)
Marshy field being negotiated by the M-113's.



FIGURE 102 (U)
Approaching objective 7.

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VII. OPERATION IN VICINITY OF CHO THAY YEN

A. (U) GENERAL

The 6th Armor Group, organized for combat with the 4th Mechanized Rifle Troop (M-113), 2d Armored Cavalry Squadron (hereafter referred to as the 4/2 Troop) with one ranger company attached, and the 3d Reconnaissance Company (M-114), 2d Armored Cavalry Squadron (hereafter referred to as the 3/2 Troop) with one rifle company attached, participated in a 7th Division operation in the vicinity of the Commercial Canal, approximately eight kilometers west of Tan An.

B. (U) PARTICIPATING UNITS

1. 7th Infantry Division Headquarters
2. 11th Infantry Regiment Headquarters
3. 1st Battalion, 10th Infantry Regiment
4. 3d Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment
5. 6th Armor Group Headquarters
6. 4/2 Troop
7. 3/2 Troop
8. Civil guard battalion, Dinh Tuong Province
9. 105mm battery, 7th Infantry Regiment
10. 155mm artillery section, 7th Infantry Division
11. Mortar section, (4.2 inch), 7th Infantry Division

C. (C) MISSION

Search and clear areas of VC infiltrators. Kill or capture VC in objective areas.

D. (C) CONCEPT OF OPERATION

The 6th Armor Group attacks on two axes generally northward from the My Tho-Tan An Highway (route 4), blocks the Commercial Canal in the vicinity of Cho Thay Yen (XS 4665) (figure 103) and kills or captures VC in

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the zone. Dismounted infantry elements are placed in blocking position along the canal by three helicopter lifts beginning at 1000 hours.

E. (C) RESULTS

1. Friendly losses: Four WIA
2. Enemy losses:
 - 1) Thirty-eight KIA
 - 2) Two POW
 - 3) One 90mm recoilless rifle (Chinese)
 - 4) Seven MAS-36 rifles
 - 5) One hundred 75mm recoilless rifle rounds
 - 6) Fifty-one 57mm recoilless rifle rounds
 - 7) One hundred and fifty 60mm mortar rounds
 - 8) Fifty modified rockets (2.36 inch)
 - 9) One thousand hand-made grenades
 - 10) One hundred and fifty thousand small arms rounds
 - 11) Two hundred antitank mines (five to thirty kilos each)
 - 12) Two PRC-10 radios
 - 13) Two 60mm mortars (Chinese)
 - 14) Four telephones
 - 15) Large quantities of antipersonnel mines, gun powder, radio equipment, drugs and uniforms

All materiel was captured by heliborne infantry elements positioned along the canal.

F. (C) HIGHLIGHTS OF SIXTH ARMOR GROUP ACTION

The 4/2 and 3/2 Troops moved abreast across their respective lines of departure at approximately 220700 December. The road from Tan Hiep (XS 478560) to Cho Cu Chi (XS 477608) was heavily ditched and roadblocked.

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The M-114's could not negotiate the ditches and roadblocks but had little difficulty moving in the rice paddies on either side of the road.

The 6th Group CP was initially located near Tan Hiep (XS 470551). When the 3/2 and 4/2 Troops reached Cho Cu Chi at approximately 0830, the CP displaced to that location. The CP's two M-113's used the road, traversing the road-blocks and ditches. The M-114's followed the M-113's and, in one instance, had to be towed out of a particularly deep ditch.

As the 4/2 Troop reached objective A-1 they crossed in front of the 3/2 Troop. Because 4/2 Troop was too far ahead of 3/2 Troop, approximately 40 VC escaped as the 4/2 moved into objectives A-3 and A-4. (See detailed discussion in paragraph G below.) The 3/2 Troop followed the attached dismounted riflemen from the LD to the canal. The rifle company moved to the canal without contact and 3/2 Troop, less the rifle company, was ordered to swing west cross-country between the A and B series objectives. They negotiated the rice paddies with little difficulty. It should be noted, however, that the water level in the paddies was considerably lower than in previous months. Approximately 20 percent of the paddies had been completely harvested and had no water standing in them. Nevertheless the M-114's did traverse some standing-water rice fields satisfactorily. The 4/2 Troop remained at objective A-5 the night of 22 December, and the 6th Group CP and 3/2 Troop returned to Tan Hiep.

On 23 December the 3/2 Troop returned to objectives B-3 and B-4 at 0800 and the 4/2 Troop moved to Tan Hiep to refuel. At 1100 the 3/2 Troop commander received an order to establish a blocking position between the A and B series objectives. He did not comply with these instructions immediately, stating that there was no need to do this because the infantry elements were withdrawing. He complied with the order when informed by the 6th Group that the VC might be withdrawing to the northeast through objectives A-3 and A-4. The 1/10 Infantry Battalion was ordered to envelop objective A-4 and A-3 from the north. The 3/2 Troop established a north to south blocking position in the open area approximately 500 meters east of objectives A-3 and A-4.

G. (C) HIGHLIGHTS OF M-113 ACTION

The 4/2 Troop with twelve M-113's, 120 men, and an attached ranger company (60 men), departed My Tho at 220600 December enroute to the LD.

The lead M-113 crossed the LD at 0658. Shortly after crossing, the troop encountered a canal which was approximately 20 meters wide. Balk aluminum bridge sections were used as push bars to cross. This crossing consumed 50 minutes because of hesitancy on the part of the troop commander as to which expedient to use and as to the exact point of entrance.

Enroute to a hamlet near objective A-1, the troop commander ordered the 81mm mortar section to fire a marking round into the edge of the

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wooded area near the hamlet. The marking round fell far short of its target and landed approximately 40 meters in front of the lead M-113 of the first platoon.

Upon arrival at the road leading through the hamlet, the 4/2 Troop crossed in front of the 3/2 Troop which was still enroute to its first objective (B-1).

Objective A-1 was cleared at 0940 with no enemy contact. Objective A-2 was cleared at 0953, also without contact. Upon approaching A-2, the troop commander used the loudspeaker set specially fabricated for unit control and psychological warfare purposes. The set can be used to clear civilians from suspected VC areas, communicate with VC forces, give lectures to local populace, etc.

Objective A-3 was entered at 1045. While clearing this objective, the infantry was fired upon by about five VC. Fire was returned. There were no casualties and the five VC escaped.

At objective A-4, the infantry dismounted from the M-113's to clear the objective while the carriers moved through the rice paddies to the east. While performing this maneuver, the assistant driver on the troop commander's M-113 sighted a force of approximately 40 VC running from the northern portion of objective A-4 across the rice paddies toward objective A-5. At the time of sighting, the VC force was in open rice paddies about 1000 meters from the lead platoon and 300 meters from the wooded edge of A-5. The troop commander was very slow in reacting to this situation. After continuous suggestions by the assigned MAAG advisor and the ACTIV observer to open fire and to rapidly pursue the VC force, the commander ordered his first platoon to fire their cal .50 MG's at the VC. There was no pursuit. The VC force entered the wooded areas of A-5 without incident. Upon questioning the troop commander as to why he did not pursue the enemy, he stated that the 3/2 Troop was located at objective B-4 and should have been able to cut off the VC force. The M-114 vehicles could be easily seen, however, in the rice paddies to the south in the vicinity of objectives B-2 and B-3.

A 30-minute artillery and mortar preparation was placed on objective A-5 prior to assault by the 4/2 Troop. However, the VC force had apparently evacuated the objective area prior to the assault as there was no hostile fire placed on the troop as it assaulted, nor were there any VC casualties.

At 1225, the troop departed objective A-5 enroute to the canal (XS 457649) where it remained overnight.

At 230830 December, the troop commander received an order to move to the group CP at Tan Hiep for refueling and to become a reserve force. Just before the troop departed, the troop commander, using the loudspeaker mounted on his M-113, requested that all civilians assemble at

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the edge of the woods. When they were assembled, he offered the government's apology for the partial destruction of the rice fields during pursuit of the VC. He further requested the people to evacuate their homes whenever VC enter their villages as this would signify the enemy's presence to friendly aircraft.

At 1345 hours, the troop commander was ordered to report to the 6th Group CP to receive an operations order. Friendly aircraft had reported a VC company in the vicinity of objective A-4, although this objective had been cleared the previous day by the 4/2 Troop.

At 1400, the troop departed from the CP location enroute to objective A-4. While enroute, the troop commander received a change of orders to attack objectives A-2 and A-3, and to be prepared to continue the attack on order.

Objectives A-2 and A-3 were cleared without enemy contact. Objective A-4 was cleared and five suspects were apprehended. During the night the villagers had filled in all VC foxholes in objective A-4.

At 1730, the troop departed A-4 enroute to their home base, My Tho, to be prepared to depart later in the evening on another mission. They arrived at My Tho at 1915 hours.

H. (C) FAVORABLE COMMENTS

The 6th Group CP was always positioned where the group commander could see the actions of the two troops.

Although the 3/2 Troop did not move as rapidly as the 4/2, they did advance without becoming permanently bogged down.

The 4/2 Troop commander ensured that his 81mm mortar section was prepared to support his infantry prior to assaulting each objective. The mortar crews rapidly emplaced their weapons while the M-113's and infantry approached each objective with no loss of momentum.

The 4/2 Troop commander effectively used the mounted loudspeakers as the troop approached each objective or wooded area, primarily for the purpose of clearing civilians from the area of operations. Civilians reacted to announcements up to 1500 meters from the set.

I. (C) UNFAVORABLE COMMENTS

Because of the lack of aggressiveness of the 3/2 Troop commander, the 40 VC who ran from the advancing 4/2 Troop were permitted to escape. Had the M-113's moved into their objectives rapidly (rather than behind walking riflemen) it is probable that the 40 VC would have been engaged at close range.

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The 6th Group CP did not learn the exact number or estimate the amount of VC who withdrew from the 4/2 Troop until after the incident. The group commander stated that there were "many". His action was to call for artillery. In the opinion of all US military personnel present, it would have been better to aggressively commit the 3/2 Troop to develop the situation.

The 4/2 Troop commander reacted very slowly upon sighting the force of approximately 40 VC in the open rice paddies. It is believed that had he opened fire immediately, this force could have been partially destroyed by cal .50 MG fire. A rapid pursuit by the M-113's, firing on the move, would have caught this force before it could reach cover in the wooded area. There were no obstacles between the insurgent force and the lead M-113's that would have hindered cross-country movement.

There was no coordination between the two mechanized forces during the operation. Had there been effective coordination, the 4/2 Troop commander could have sent one platoon to the east of objective A-5 to block the route over which the VC escaped.

The 4/2 Troop consumed excessive time in deciding which expedient to use for canal crossings. This troop had operated in the same area in October 1963 and had even traveled over the same routes and crossed the same canals almost at the same sites previously used. Prior planning on the part of the commander would have prevented waste of valuable time.

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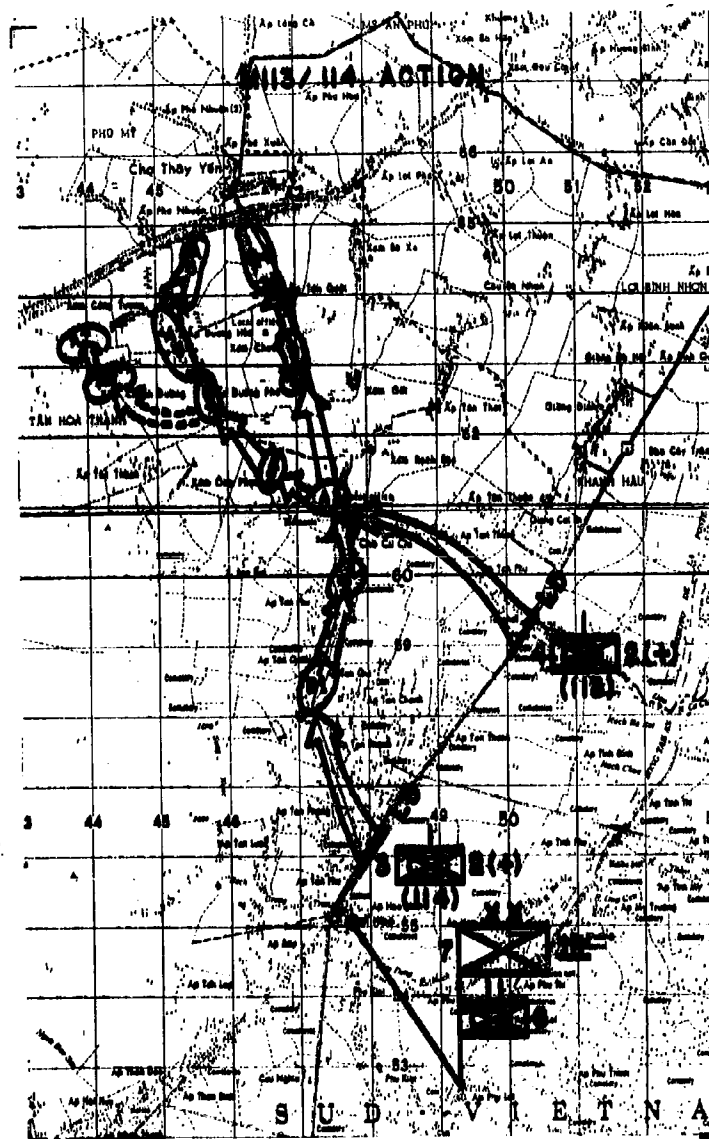


FIGURE 103 (U)

Plan of Operation, Cho Thuy Yen.
 Map: Vietnam, 1:50,000, Tan An and My Tho
 Sheets 6242 I and II
 Series L701



FIGURE 104 (U)
The troop approaches the canal they had crossed in
October 1963.

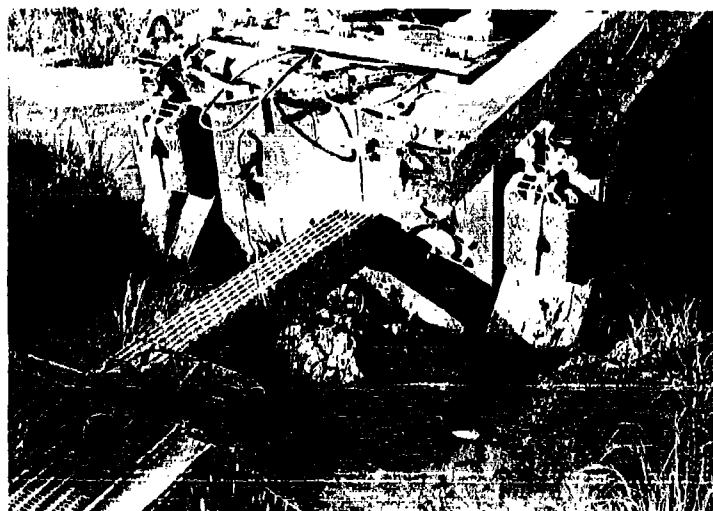


FIGURE 105 (U)
Pushing the first M-113 across with balk aluminum
bridging.

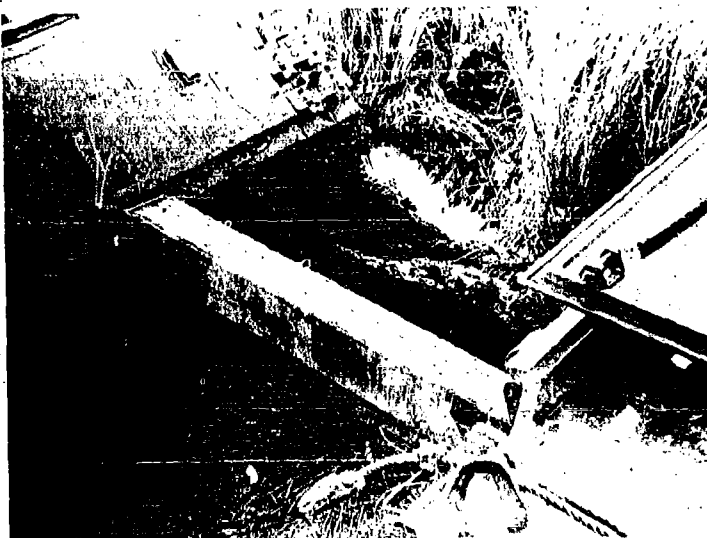


FIGURE 106 (U)
A second M-113 uses balk aluminum bridging to push.
This is the "daisy-chain" method.

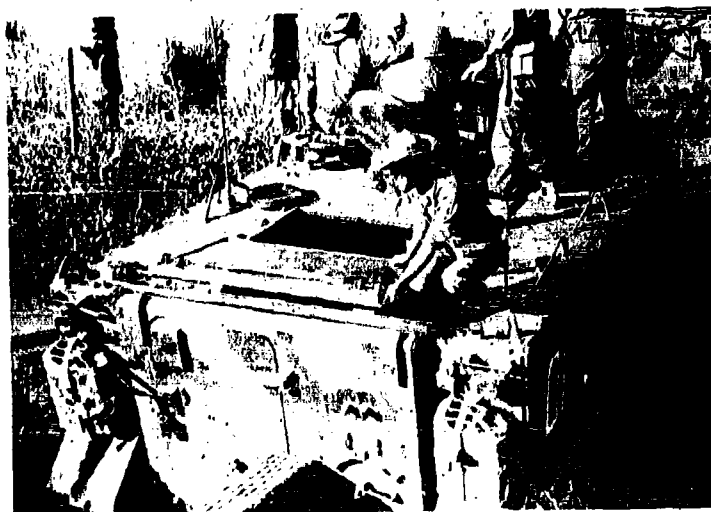


FIGURE 107 (U)
The first M-113 has been successfully pushed across.
It can now be used to pull.



FIGURE 108 (U)

Note the condition of both banks of the canal after the troop has crossed.

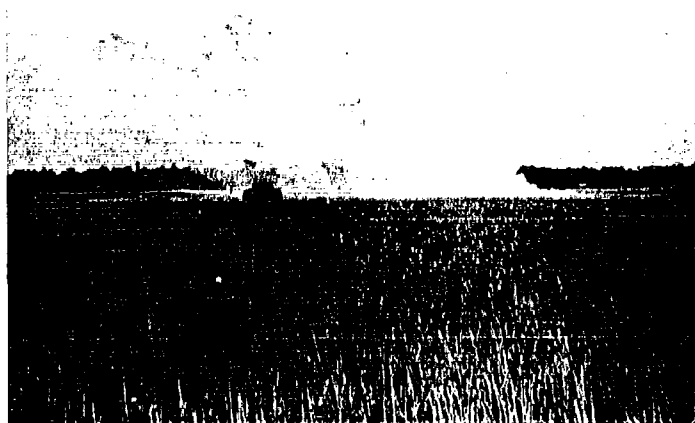


FIGURE 109 (U)

The troop 81mm mortar section fires marking rounds.



FIGURE 110 (U)
4/2 Troop moves to their first objective.

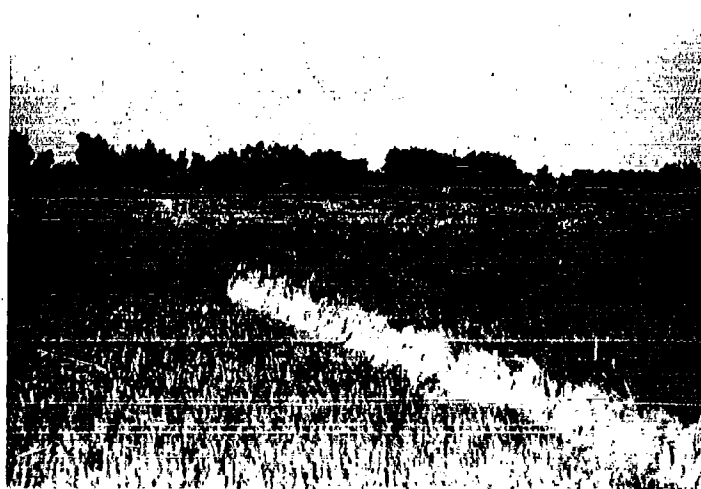


FIGURE 111 (U)
Infantry dismounts to clear objective A-1.



FIGURE 112 (U)
81mm mortar section fires marking round into objective
A-2 as infantry moves forward.



FIGURE 113 (U)
The loudspeaker set being used by troop commander.



FIGURE 114 (U)
Villager being questioned by the troop commander.

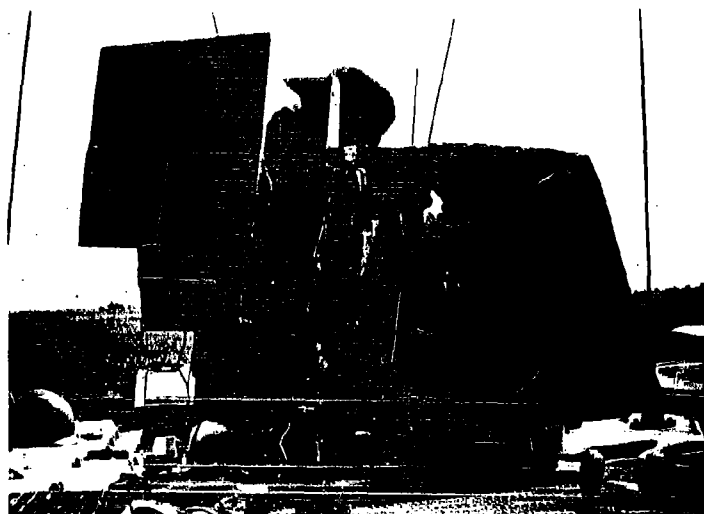


FIGURE 115 (U)
The loudspeaker set is mounted on the gun shield of an M-113.

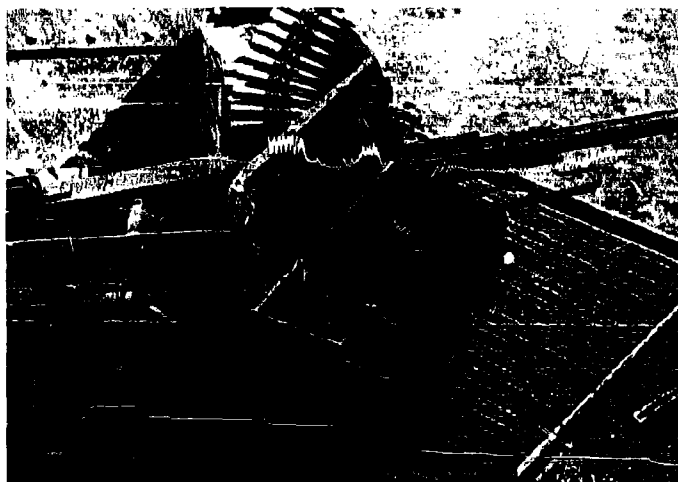


FIGURE 116 (U)
Loudspeaker set receptacle mounted on the gun shield.



FIGURE 117 (U)
Dismounted infantry moving in to clear objective A-2.



FIGURE 118 (U)
Troop clearing objective A-3.

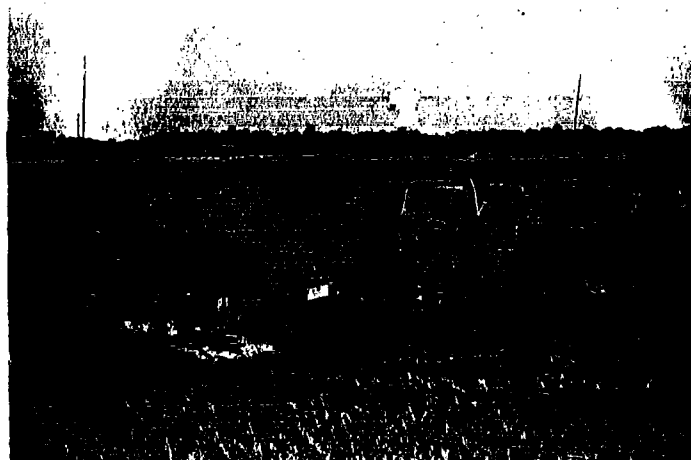


FIGURE 119 (U)
81mm mortar section fires marking round into ob-
jective A-3.

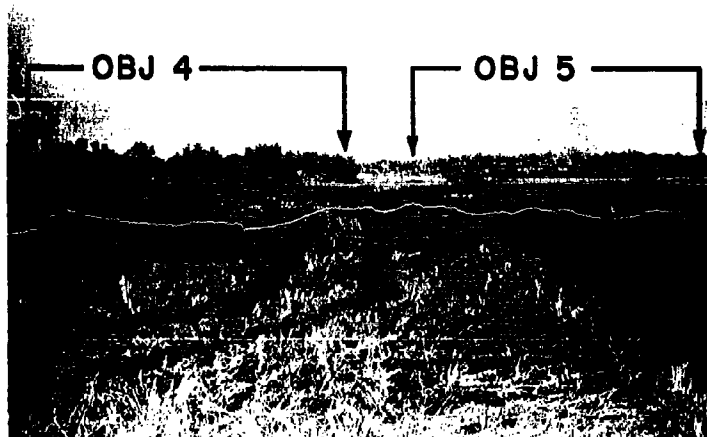


FIGURE 120 (U)
Assaulting objective A-3.



FIGURE 121 (U)

Troop moving to clear objective A-4.



FIGURE 122 (U)
Searching for VC and weapons in objective A-4.



FIGURE 123 (U)
Viet Cong foxhole in objective A-4.

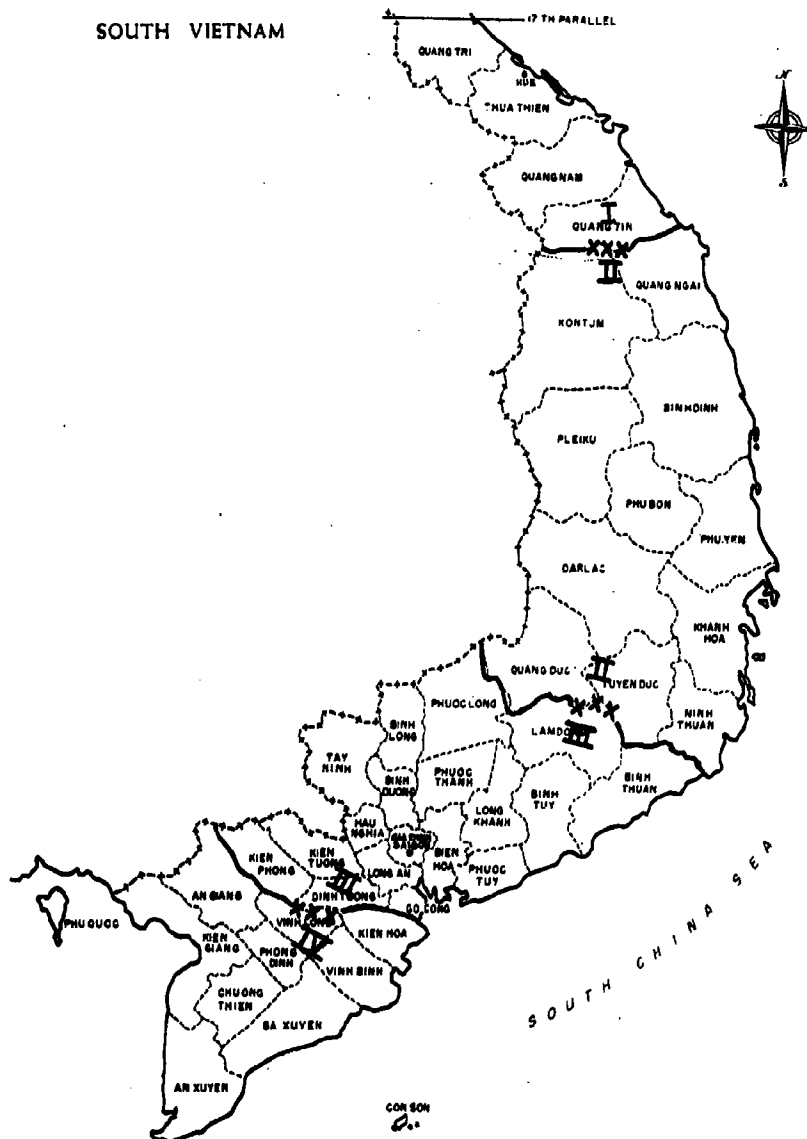


FIGURE 124 (U)
Local populace assembling at the edge of the woods.

ANNEX A (U)

RVN CORPS BOUNDARIES AS OF 31 DECEMBER 1963

SOUTH VIETNAM



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(C) ANNEX B

STATUS OF ARVN ARMOR UNITS AS OF 31 DECEMBER 1963

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>TYPE OF VEHICLE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF VEHICLES</u>	<u>CORPS AREA</u>
5th Armor Group (Hq)	Saigon			III (capital military district)
1st Troop, 1st Sqdn	Saigon	M-24	17	
1st Troop, 2d Sqdn	Saigon	M-24	17	
Unnumbered Troop (Old Presidential Guard)	Saigon	M-24	17	
6th Armor Group (Hq)	My Tho			III
4th Troop, 2d Sqdn	My Tho	M-113	13	
4th Troop, 4th Sqdn	My Tho	M-113	15	
3d Troop, 2d Sqdn	My Tho	M-114	20 (2 at 80th Ord)	
1st Armd Cav Sqdn (Hq)	Saigon			III
4th Troop, 1st Sqdn	Go Dau Hoa	M-113	15	
3d Troop, 1st Sqdn	Ben Cat	M-114	20	
2d Troop, 1st Sqdn	Phouc Thanh	M-8	20	
2d Armd Cav Sqdn (Hq)	Vinh Long			IV
5th Troop, 2d Sqdn	Bac Lieu	M-113	14	
5th Troop, 1st Sqdn	Can Tho	M-113	14	

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ANNEX B

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<u>UNIT</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>TYPE OF VEHICLE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF VEHICLES</u>	<u>CORPS AREA</u>
2d Troop, 2d Sqdn	Vinh Long	M-8	20	
3d Armd Cav Sqdn (Hq)	Pleiku			II
1st Troop, 3d Sqdn	Pleiku	M-24	17	
2d Troop, 3d Sqdn	Kentum	M-8	20	
3d Troop, 3d Sqdn	Pleiku	M-114	20	
4th Troop, 3d Sqdn	Nui Dau	M-113	15	
5th Troop, 3d Sqdn	Tuy Hoa	M-113	15	
4th Armd Cav Sqdn (Hq)	Da Nang			I
1st Troop, 4th Sqdn	Quang Tri	M-24	17	
2d Troop, 4th Sqdn	Hue	M-8	16	
3d Troop, 4th Sqdn	Da Nang	M-114	20	
5th Troop, 4th Sqdn	Dong Ha	M-113	15	

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(C) ANNEX C

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS

1. (U) OBJECTIVE

To determine the logistical support requirement for units and individual M-113 vehicles that are operated in a counterinsurgency role in the Republic of Vietnam.

2. (C) DISCUSSION

a. Major Assembly Replacement

Anticipated failures based upon usage factors and average mileage per vehicle, resulted in the initiation of a \$585,629.00 major assembly replacement program for the M-113. The dollar figure represents that amount of material required to fill the present supply chain and support the rebuild program. Additionally, the above action will place major replacement parts in the hands of field M-113 repair teams, which will reduce deadline time.

b. Engines

An engine replacement and rebuild program is well under way. Engine replacements are based on 5000 mile wearout. Some engines accumulate 7000 to 8000 miles before replacement is required. The following numbers of engines are programed for the remainder of FY 64 at a cost of \$1,475.00 per unit:

- 1) January 1964 - 16
- 2) February 1964 - 10
- 3) March 1964 - 16
- 4) April 1964 - 3
- 5) May 1964 - 23
- 6) June 1964 - 3

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ANNEX C

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c. Operational Vehicles

A total of 139 of the original 147 M-113's received in Vietnam are operational. Eight vehicles were combat losses. Fourteen replacement vehicles are programed for FY 64. Of this number, eight replacement vehicles were shipped from CONUS on 3 December 1963 with an expected time of arrival in Saigon of 4 January 1964. The remaining six vehicles that were programed have not been approved for purchase as of this date.

d. Cupola (Navy 100E - Single Cal .30 MG)

Five cupolas were purchased for evaluation. Their present disposition is indicated below:

- 1) One - 4th Troop, 1st Squadron.
- 2) Two - 4th Troop, 2d Squadron.
- 3) One - Salvage yard (destroyed 2 November 1963).
- 4) One - Remained in the United States to be modified if necessary.

e. Cupola, M74A (Aircraft Armament - Twin Cal .30 MG)

Ten cupolas were purchased for evaluation. Their present disposition is indicated below:

- 1) Two - 4th Troop, 2d Squadron.
- 2) Two - 5th Troop, 2d Squadron.
- 3) Two - 4th Troop, 3d Squadron.
- 4) Two - 4th Troop, 4th Squadron.
- 5) One - ARVN Armor School.
- 6) One - Remained in the United States to be modified if necessary.

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ANNEX D (U)

REFERENCES

1. DA letter, AGAM-P (M) 381 (31 Oct 63) DCSOPS, subject: "Army Troop Test Program in Vietnam" (U), 6 November 1962, as amended.

2. ACTIV letter (to CGUSARCGDC), subject: "Plan of Test, Mechanized Rifle Troop (M-113)," 28 November 1962.

3. ACTIV letter (to CINCPAC through COMUSMACV), subject: "Summary of Test Plan for Mechanized Rifle Troop (M-113)," 3 December 1962.

4. CINCPAC message, subject: "Proposal for US Army Test in Vietnam," DTG 2202216Z (January 1963).

5. "Monthly Test Reports Numbers 1 through 9, Mechanized Rifle Troop (M-113)," (U), Army Concept Team in Vietnam.

(U) ANNEX E

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